Poreč

Monuments

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A gift
from Poreč
Tourist board

Sniježana Matejčić

Monuments

GUIDE BOOK

Poreč

You complete us

A gift from Poreč Tourist board

Dear traveler,

in front of you lays a town where people used to live since prehistoric times. Poreč urban frame was set by antique planners at the beginning of a new era on a peninsula only 400 meters long and 200 meters wide. They'd decided on the direction of the main streets, marked the land for houses, palaces and public buildings.

This ancient territorial disposition of a roman settlement that became Colonia Julia Parentium in the 1st century A.D. , is still visalbeand represents a uniqueremains of the classical roman urban structure on Croatian side of the Adriatic. The longest main street, roman decumanus maximus is still here and it even preserved its ancient name Dekumanska street. Eastward from the town it continued as roman decumanus agri, a road that led from the town to the fields.

The town survived two thousand years of good and lesser fortune. The buildings remaining from different periods of its long life can help to figure out how the town developed. We have preserved the first Town statute from 1264 and what got hidden in time under new buildings or on the account of needs of modern living is slowly, from time to time rising to the surface again. The last detail of huge historical importance that was dug up in 2005, during the reconstruction of the old town infrastructure and stone pavement is right in front of you a **Renaissance bridge at the entrance to Decumanus (1)** so there is no better place to start a sightseeing walk around the 2 thousand old town. The walk will resemble an art history class since one can read from the "face" of Poreč as from an open book: almost all stiles and periods in history of urban development are present. A little was torn down, people used to build on what was already there, preserved from time, fire or bombs. This bridge was built after the Pentagonal tower (6), since its structure is leaning on the tower wall. It is possible that there was an older bridge, medieval or roman, since town walls date that long back in history. There's still a lot of work for archeologists. But let us step bravely forward to what is now there. Look to the left.

The system of the fortification walls (2) that you can see dates from antiquity, than 12th and 16th century. They'd construct new walls on the remains of the previous. The town didn't spread outside the antique walls for a long time, so they are still present, although houses were constructed on them in more recent times. Mayor Warnerio de Gillago undertook restoration of the fortification towers and huge construction works in town in 13th century. yet the best preserved is eastern part of the walls with three towers built under the threat of Turkish invasion at the end of the 15th century, when Poreč was part of the Venetian Republic. This section of the fortification walls was largely damaged when houses were constructed on them in 18th and later in 19th and 20th century. During the restoration of **Pentagonal tower (3)** in the beginning of the 1990-es the traces of two older towers have been found roman and medieval. On their remains in 1447 mayor Nicoló Lion had a new Pentagonal tower built. In 18th century a big house was attached to it. At the end of the 20th century most of the tower was impassable, filled up with soil and on its top, instead of the observation platform there stood a miniature vegetable garden. Thanks to the private initiative the tower was rented and a manager had let it first to the archeologists and monument protection specialists to get a unique interior for the restaurant. One shouldn't miss the opportunity to see the inside of the tower, look from its lower terrace along Decumanus street and from the observation platform level see the medieval and new part of the town, called "fora le porte" (outside the town gate) by the locals.

Let's proceed along Decumanus, the main old town street. The house with number 5 deserves to look us to see two trifora of the **Gothic palace (4)** built in 1473 in gotico fiorito Venetian architectural stile. In this period of its life Poreč was undoubtfully a home to quite a few wealthy families that didn't mind paying a lot for their houses to be nice and modern as in Venice. A number of such palaces is preserved.

Further along Decumanus on number 9 there is a baroque palace of Sinčić family built in 1720 housing a **County museum (5)**, the oldest museum in Istria founded in 1884. Its collections give testimony about town's long history. Courtyard and ground level are lapidarium a collection of stone monuments mostly from Antiquity, and in side rooms of the ground floor there are artifacts from prehistoric hill-forts in Poreč neighborhood. On first and second floor there are salons with baroque furniture. Museum keeps a collection of important historical documents, valuable collection of books and a number of oil painted portraits of bishops and town noblemen. One of them is particularly interesting showing Gian Rinaldo Carly in Turkish costume, since he was an official interpreter for the venetian government on Turkish court. He wrote two books on Turkish literature and music tradition.

Form Museum to the right, Ulica Svetog Eeleuterija (St. Eleuterie street) will take you to **Early Christian cathedral complex Eufrasiana (6)**. Metal doorway and a mosaic above it are from the beginning of the 20th century and the inscription around Christ's face is from the Gospel according to John: "I am the gate. Who enters through me shall be saved". And when you enter through this gate you are stepping into a sight inherited from the 4th century. It became part of the UNESCO heritage in 1997 and the cathedral complex consists of a cathedral, bishop's palace, baptistery and archeological remains of earlier churches.

Legend says that there was a secret Christian community in Parentium in the 4th century. The head of the community was its first bishop Mavar (Croatian version of the name), or Mauro (Italian version of the name). Legend also says that the Christians used to meet for prayer in a patritian house (simple roman citizen's home) until the roman soldiers found bishop Mavar and a priest Eleuterie. They both died suffering and were later sanctified. St. Mavar is a patron saint of Poreč. How much of the legend can be proved? The documents testify that there was a "Mauro confessor" in 4th or 5th century whose holy remains were trans-

5

5

fered into a new tomb inside the cathedral. Which roman citizen offered his home as a Christian sanctuary, which was the house where they prayed together? That remains secret.

The corridor that leads from the street portal to the church atrium used to be a street in roman times CARDO **(I)**. This street in front of you had a gate that was sealed up in Middle Ages. Traces of that gate **(B)** that led through the northern town walls to the bay Peškera were found 15 years ago in the course of archeological excavation. In the same time they found remains of the mosaic floor that was a missing link for the scholar hypothesis that the northern part of the cardo was in 4th century turned into a nartex of the first of the two churches constructed prior to the cathedral. To make a complex story of the cathedral sight as clear as possible it is best to step into BISHOP'S PALACE **(II)** FIRST. It was constructed in the mid 6th century as well as the cathedral and its plan is the same as the three ailed churches with three round apses have. Since the time it was constructed till 15 years ago it was a home to bishops of Poreč, now days bishops of Poreč and Pula. After fourteen centuries of such continuity there was an agreement to build a new bishop's home in the yard and leave the old one to the archeologists and monument protection specialists. An enormous work was ahead in order to return the interior to its original shape, since through centuries bishops had it several times adjusted to their actual needs. It took 10 years to finish the huge project.

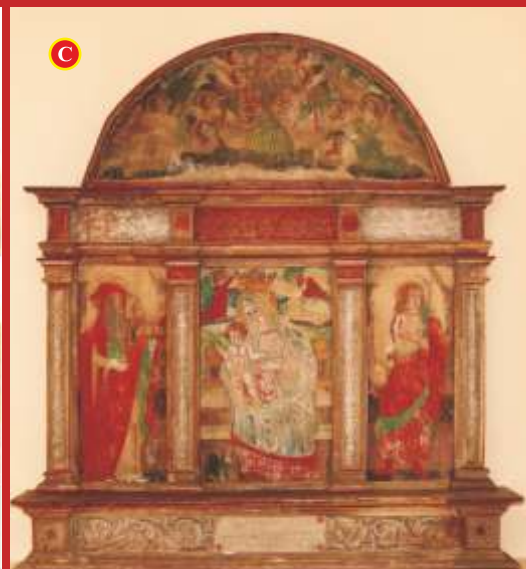
The lower part of the palace is housing a lapidarium where the stone monuments are exhibited found in a course of few centuries of digging and excavation on the sight and in the neighborhood. Among the exhibits there is a stone bishop's seat from Carolingian times and parts of the floor mosaics from the 4th and 5th century. In the central apse, behind the transparent door there is a precious mosaic part that belonged to the First basilica from 4th century. It shows a feature of a fish *ichtys* in greek, that Christians read as: Jesus Christ, Soon of Good, our Savior. Fish was a secret Christian symbol. Next to this mosaic the central exhibition post

belongs also to a part of the 6th century marble altar showing a dolphin. The inscription on it says that the bishop Eufrasius had the church rebuilt in the 12th year of his service.

Step to a small portico from the lapidarium and then up the stairs to the first floor to the portal that bishop Alessandro Adelasio had built in 1694. You are entering the space that is now a church art museum of the Bishopric of Poreč and Pula. The hall you entered is the most important exhibit in this museum it was built in the 6th century as a ceremonial hall **(A)** since in those days bishops held church and civil power in the same time. The hall was used for ceremonial audiences. To return it to its original shape took a lot of patient and complex work since at one stage in its history it was divided horizontally into two floors connected with a staircase that closed the main apse.

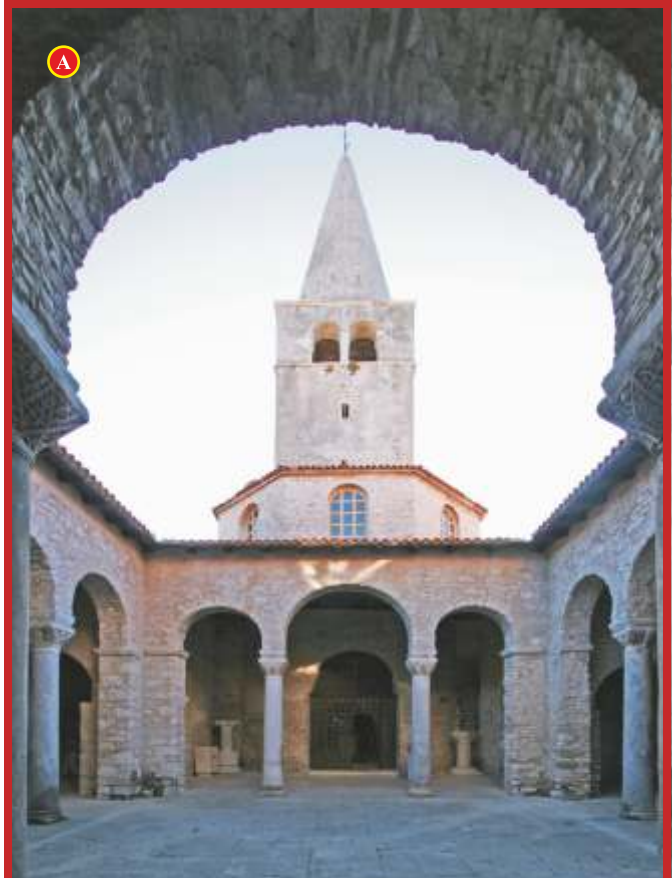
From the ceremonial hall the firs door leads to the baroque bishops' salons, and from them you are entering rooms in which some of the pearls of the church art are exhibited: sculpture, paintings, goldsmith objects and hand embroidered mass vestments. There are, amongst most precious, Romanesque and Gothic statues, a polyptych by Antonio Vivarini **(B)** (1440), a tryptych by Anton from Padova **(C)** (1529), carved wooden crucifixes.

When you end up again at the staircase that got you to the first floor of the palace, don't rush down stairs, go to the side room with a window to have a spectacular **look at the remains of the church prior to Eufrasius' basilica (III).** Scholars say that there were at least two churches before the one that survived. The first of them, whose remains are visible north from the cathedral wall, dates to the 4th century and it consisted of three unequal rectangular halls. Some of its floor mosaics have survived. It was constructed above earlier roman civil building and its entrance was from the nartex former Roman street. Some scholars stated that the roman home above which the church was built was the secret sanctuary of the first Christian community, but no proof was ever found for that. In the mid 5th century this first church was enlarged to what is now called Pre-Eufrasiana.



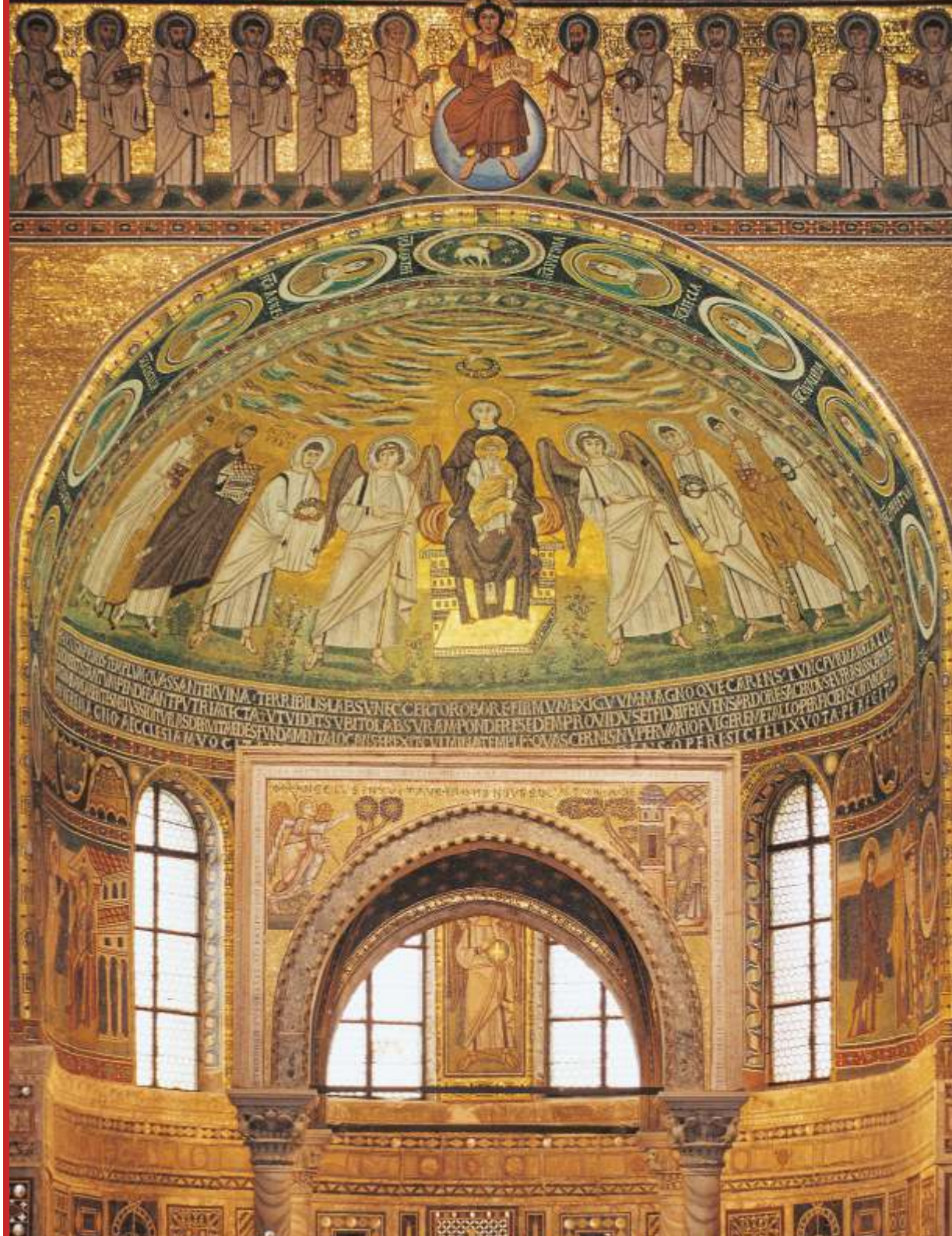
Latest excavation gave completely new and different explanation of this church: it was a *basilica gemina* consisting of two similar three-nave basilicas separated by a narrow corridor and a cistern. These churches used an earlier nartex and its floor had mosaic decoration. South part of the basilica gemina became part of Eufrasiana when it was constructed in the 6th century. The remains of its floor mosaics are visible under the floor of a standing cathedral. Northern part of Pre-Eufrasiana is only an archeological remain, and part of its floor mosaic is preserved under the sacristy floor.

Now that you've detected parts of the archeological sight from the window, return to see them from the closer distance and than step through the door back to the atrium and to the BAPTISTERY **(IV)**. It is a part of Pre-Eufrasiana. Its octagonal in shape and in its center there is a hexagonal baptismal well. Above the baptistery a 35 meters tall bell tower was erected in 16th century on the remains of the prior from Romanesque period **(A)**. Before you leave the complex make sure to climb it steep staircase for a spectacular sight of Poreč roof tops the island and the sea **(B)**. From there you can also see the highest part of the cathedral with partly preserved wall mosaics on which the Apocalyptic Christ with the Apostles is shown.



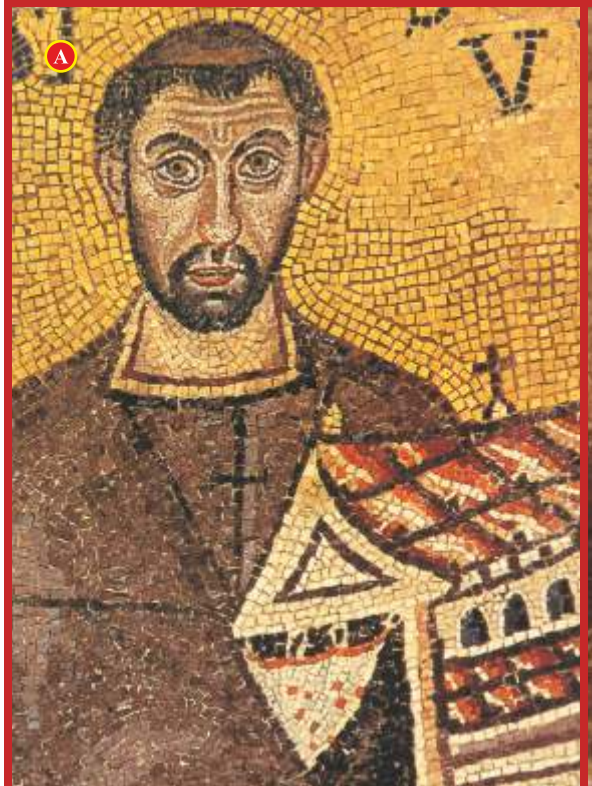
It is finally time to visit EUFRASIUS BASILICA **(V)**. Bishop Eufrasius left multiple inscriptions in various places inside the church that testify that he had the church built up from the ruins, but the scholars proved what he actually did: he had the south part of Pre-Eufrasiana enlarged and new shrine constructed and richly decorated, he had a memorial chapel erected, and atrium and bishopric. The cathedral is dedicated to Virgin Marry and Poreč patron saint Maurus. Entering a three-nave church you will be drawn to mosaics and a ciborium in front of the shrine, but hold on! The pavement under your feet was set in the beginning of the 20th century since the authentic mosaic pavement was destructed and the remains are only visible in the south apse. Parts of the authentic mosaic pavement of 5th century Pre-Eufrasiana and 4th century First basilica are visible from the openings in the floor. Church naves are separated by two rows of colonnade with beautifully carved marble capitals and altar screen reconstructed from peaces was made from the same material. Capital decorations are repeated in pairs, and above each of them bishop Eufrasius monogram was carved. The inside of the arches connecting columns were decorated with stucco, but only those of north colonnade survived. Bishop's cathedra in main apse and a bench for clergy is original from the time of church construction. Next to the south nave three chapels were added in 17th, 19th and the beginning of the 20th century.

All three apses were originally decorated with mosaic but only the one in the main apse is completely preserved. Starting from the top a middle figure shows Christ holding a book in one hand and blessing with another. Round Christ there are twelve apostles. Agnus Dei is presented in the center of triumphal arch. Left and right from



it there are twelve medallions circling the faces of the Christian woman martyrs. The central part of the apse is shows a votive scene of Madonna on the pedestal with Christ in her lap and above them is arm holding a crown. Angels and holy martyrs are on their sides including St. Maurus and bishop Eufrasius shown with a model of basilica in his hands **(A)**. Inscription under this scene says about bishop Eufrasius's achievement in rebuilding the church. Lower left shows Annunciation and lower right feature is Visitation. Among the windows there are figures of the saints. The apse decoration ends with geometrical ouis sectile marble, glass and seashells incrustations consisting of 21 individual main panels and a decorative frieze above them. Poreč mosaics are almost completely original, only partially restored during a long period of 15 centuries since they were maid. In side apses there only fragments of wall mosaics have been preserved showing almost identical composition: young Christ handing martyr crowns to Kuzma and Damian in one and Ursus and Severus in other apse. Ciborium in front of the shrine was constructed in 1277. Bishop Oton had it made and it was erected above marble columns whose capitals imitate the ones from the 6th century. The front mosaic of the ciborium repeats the story of Annunciation from the early Christian mosaics, as well as the figure of Agnus Dei. One of the inscriprions in mosaic says ciborium was built by bishop Oton, and the rest of them are religious messages, that is votives connected with the figures of local martyrs maurus, Eleuterie, Akolit, Projekt, Dimitri and Julian. In front of the ciborium there are two gravestones with figures of Poreč bishops. One of them is Ivan Porečanin (Johanes de Parentio) from 15th century. Front of the altar is decorated with silver gold plated antependium which was originally an altar-piece ordered from Venice in 1451 by bishop Ivan Porečanin. As early as in 17th century the figures of the saints were stolen from the monumental Renaissance relief.

North from the ciborium there is an entrance into the MEMORIAL CHAPEL **(VI)** in which St. Maurus' sarcophagus is kept **(B)**. In Medieval times this chapel became a



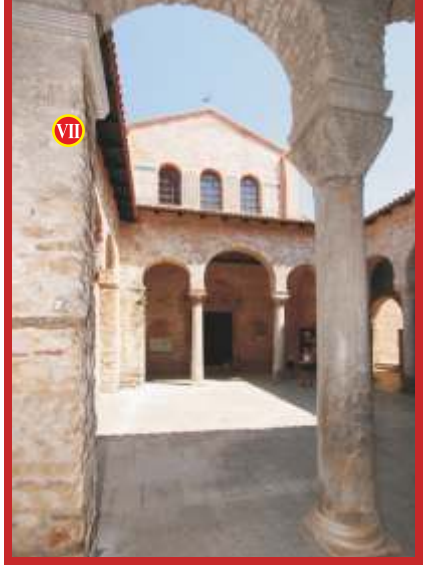
fortification. Part of the chapel was partially enlarged in 13th and 15th century to turn it into a sacristy.

Leaving basilica you will notice traces of the 14th century fresco paintings on the wall next to the door.

Visit to cathedral will be ended in ATRIUM **VII)** built in the same time as the church and bishop's palace. It was restored in 19th century with money given by Austro-Hungarian Emperor Frantz Joseph, as the stone inscription in one of the corners says. On the walls of the atrium there are coats of arms and gravestones of Poreč bishops.

Back on the street, next to Eufrasiana is **Canonica (7)** built in 1251 and still inhabited by a parish priest. On the opposite side of the entrance to Eufrasiana there is and 18th century **Vergottini palace (8)**. On Decumanus there is a group of Gothic palaces as magnificent as Venetian from the same period. Those are private homes on street numbers 39 **(9)**, 15 **(10)**, 10 **(11)**, palace Zucatto **(12)** today housing an art gallery of Poreč open university and 12 **(13),** at the corner of Dacumanus and Cardo and blocs of palaces along both streets.

Istrian parliament hall (14) used to be St. Francis church in the beginning of the 14th century. Monastery was attached to it. At the end of 18th century the ceiling was decorated with stucco and wall paintings and the monastery was closed during brief Napoleon rule in 1806 so it declined in time. Abandoned church was restored in 1861 when Poreč became part of Austro-Hungarian Monarchy: it was divided horizontally so the upper part was turned into a ceremonial hall used for the sessions of the Regional parliament. Lover part was turned into a wine cellar with the barrels plated with glass tiles preserved till today. At the end of the last century, during the restoration of the neighboring building into an Italian primary school there was an archeological excavation that showed the base of the earlier church of St. Thomas from the 5th century and the remains of its floor mosaics. The findings were left where they were found, just partially restored so they could last, and are presented under



transparent staircase leading to the ceremonial hall today used for art exhibitions and special sessions of Regional assembly.

Part of the antique Poreč is today hidden under actual square **Marafor (15)**. Archeological excavation and presentation of the original square is being prepared and it is preserved one meter under the surface we are using nowadays. This is partially visible in Town library (**a**), children playroom (**b**), shop (**c**) and ground floor of a private house (**d**) that is being reconstructed. Forum is on the western end of Decumanus and on its edges once stood **antique temples (16)**. Preserved columns of a smaller temple (**f**) are to the right. Some scholars think that it was dedicated to Neptune. Bigger temple (**e**) was probably dedicated to Mars and three monumental walls survived and parts of its gable are attached to each other in a construction in order to be preserved where they originally were to testify antique history of Poreč. Written documents reveal that the vice admiral of the Ravenna fleet Titus Abudius Verus had the town port built and a temple restored in 1st century.

Romanesque house (17) from the mid 13th century is today housing art gallery on the ground floor while two other floors are exhibition space for the ethnographic collection of the Town museum.

Matija Gubac square (18) used to be called Piazza dei signori in Venetian times but only one row of the palaces have been preserved, among them a nice example from Gothic and from Baroque period.

Fran Supilo square (19) doesn't appear to be interesting at first sight, except for it small Gothic house. Most interesting is hidden under the pavement. During restoration of infrastructure in 1998 this part of the town called by the locals Predol revealed archeological remains of a medieval monastery. It was constructed over the remains of an antique house whose partial traces of floor mosaic were found.

House of The Two saints (20) got its name after relieves on its façade. It is a simple, rustic 15th century Renaissance house but the relieves are Romanesque, reused for decoration, and it is highly possible that they came from the close monastery. This building is housing offices of regional monument protection office of Croatian Ministry of culture.

Round southern tower (21) was built in 1475 next to the earlier, by the order of the Mayor Pietro de Mula. Small central chamber is housing a bar. The original stone staircase has been preserved and it leads to the observatory, now a bar terrace with a beautiful view to the island St. Nicholas and town riva.

Theatre (22) was built in 1885 as Teatro Verdi and it has mostly preserved its original interior.

Town hall (23) is from 1910, built according to the project made by Trieste architect Arduino Berlam.

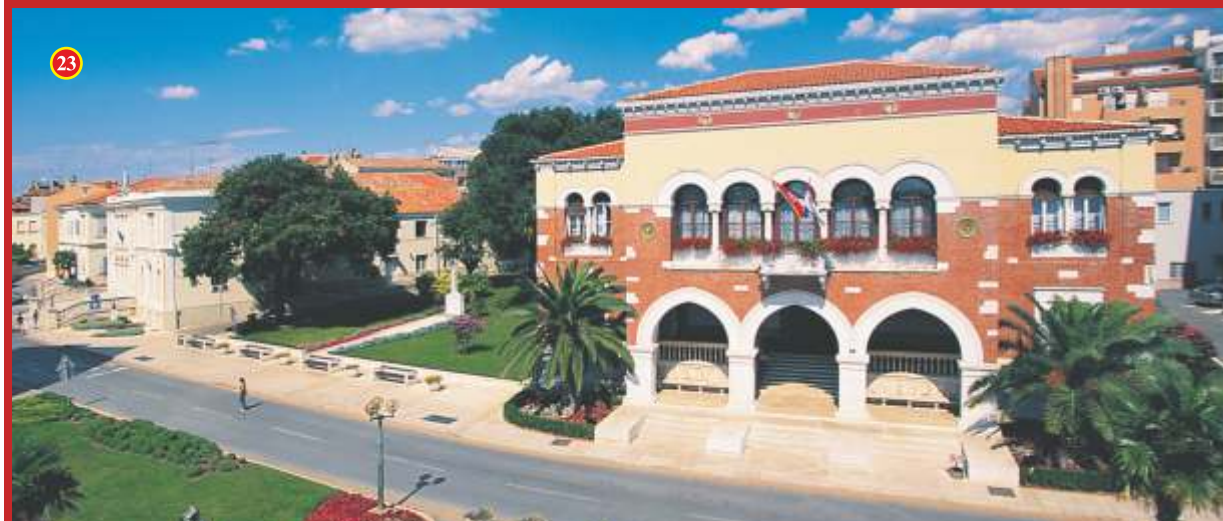
Our Lady of the Angel church (24) from 1770 was built on the remains of the earlier, Romanesque church. It has Baroque altars, statues of the saints and two valuable altarpieces done by Italian painters.

North tower Peškera (25) is in ruins and filled inside. Mayor Francesco Mondulmier had it constructed in 1473. Next to the tower a vaulted gate into the town stands. Openings for cannons and guns are still visible on the wall of the tower.

In medieval church of **St. Eleuterie (26)** a mass is served only once a year here.

In the town center there is still one interesting spot, an island St. Nicholas with the oldest **lighthouse (27)** on Croatian side of the Adriatic, built in 1403 and **a little castle (28)** from 1886 that was built for noble Benedetto Polesini.

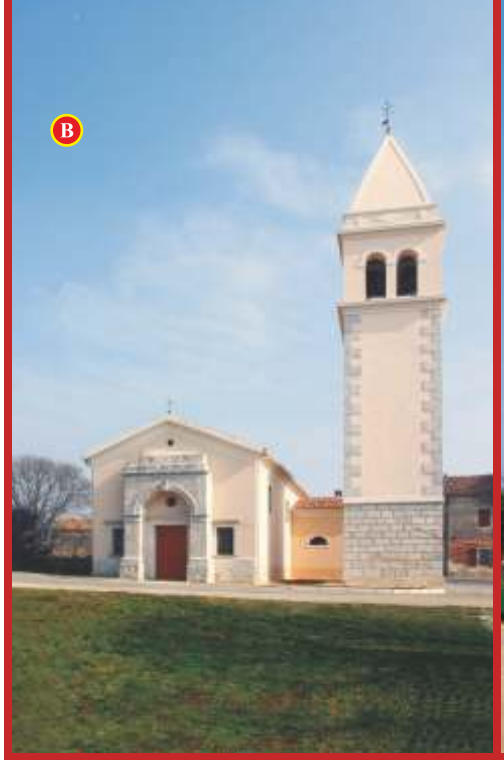
Some will find a **complex at the entrance to Poreč (28)** interesting for its architecture and position. Austrians built it 1907 for regional enological institute, and it is today Institute for agriculture and tourism with a tradition from the end of the 19th century.



Those of you who like prehistoric sights won't be sorry to drive firs and than walk to **Picugi** and **Mount St. Angelo** remains of prehistoric settlements. Not more than a few monumental stones and a part of a cult building have been preserved there, but the view to the town and neighborhood is spectacular.

If your favorite period of history is antiquity than there are few sights to visit. One is on Cove Sorna, next to the parking lot of the hotel Zorna in Zelena laguna where **remains of antique villa (30)** have been preserved. They were revealed when this tourist village was built. In a tourist village Červar Porat some 12 kilometers west from Poreč there are **remains of another antique villa**. You will have to walk or take a boat to the shore of the peninsula Lorun opposite the village to see **archeological remains of Roman villa and manufacture for amfora**. It has been explored and excavated for 10 years now by an international team of archeologists. They have proved that here was one of the biggest "factories" for amfora used for transportation of olive oil, probably also produced in the vicinity. The sight was active over 300 years.

Only six kilometers from Poreč toward Pazin there is a village **Žbandaj (A)** that became live after arrival of the families coming from Dalmatian hinterland in 1570. There is a parish church dedicated to Sts. John and Paul is from 1595. Ten kilometers further toward Pazin there is **Baderna (B)** with a parish church of Mary's nativity from 16th century, enlarged in 19th century and not far from trhe village they found 10.000 ears old human bones. In the villages **Nova Vas** and **Fuškulin (C)** nice examples of old rural architecture can bee seen.



Obala dr. Ante Šonje
Obala Matka Laginje
Eufrazijeva bazilika
Park J. Dobrile
Eufrazijeva
Trg Marafor
Decumanus
Park M. Gupca
Trg M. Gupca
Trg F. Supila
Trg A. Grabara
Sv. Maura
Hotel Neptun
Hotel Parentino
Dep. Jadran
Ribarski trg
Prolaz Peškera
Uvala Peškera
Nikole Tesle
Park Olge Ban
Otokara Keršovanija
J. Šurana
Zagrebačka
Trg Slobode
Narodni trg
A. Negrija
Obala maršala Tita
Pietra Kandlera
Bože Milanovića
8.marta
Istarskog razvoda
Vladimira Gortana
Pionirska
Prvomajska
Trg J. Rakovca
Mlinska
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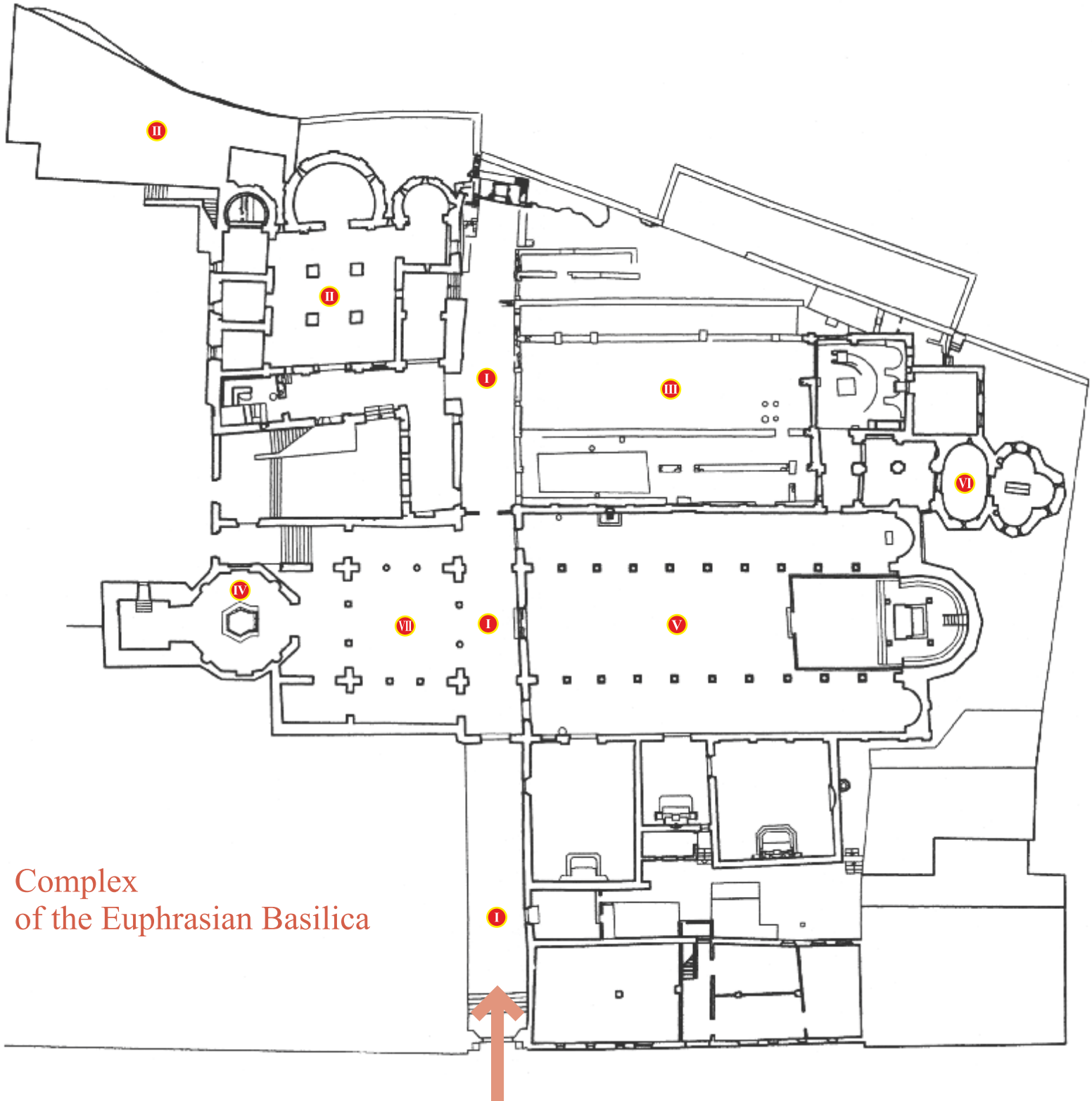

Complex
of the Euphrasian Basilica