

Chapter III - Bologna and Ducati

Bologna is a short drive down the autostrada from Milan. The main reason it's on our itinerary is because Ducatis are made in Bologna. This time we don't get lost. Ducati isn't in Bologna proper but in a suburb called Borgo Panigale; we have hotel reservations just around the corner from the factory. As we approach the city there is a labeled exit for Borgo Panigale! Once off the autostrada it's easy to find the Ducati factory, then the street to the hotel and then the hotel itself. Score!

1. Ducati Factory Tour

Our first day in Bologna is spent at Ducati. We walk to the Ducati entrance and are met by Sr. Livio Lodi, the Ducati museum curator, for lunch in the Ducati cafeteria. Paul first met Livio in 2001 at the Ducati Revs America event in Las Vegas and he was pleased to see him again.

The factory tour is first with the museum visit later. Photographs are not allowed in the factory so there are no pictures, sorry. The tour is

really interesting. Livio tells us how, when the Texas Pacific Group began management, they transitioned from the old way of doing things to a "just in time" system of manufacturing. He says it's "Japanese organization with German efficiency and Italian fantasy." Most would translate it as "Italian imagination" but we like fantasy.

For example, there is a team of 3 or 4 people who assemble the motor. Someone else prepares a "shopping cart" that contains the exact pieces needed to build one engine -- the two crankcase halves, front and rear cylinders & heads, and the exact number of nuts, bolts, washers, gaskets, bearings, etc. It really is a cart that can be wheeled around. When the assembly is complete all compartments in the cart must be empty -- if there's anything left over there's been a mistake. Simple quality control! After assembly every engine is run on a bench, up and down the rev range and through the gearbox. Not just a sub-sample of the motors, mind you, but *every* motor has to pass the test.

Then it's on to the main assembly line that contains a number of stations, each station being a specific assembly step. Station one is where the frame and swing arm are attached



The [Ducati factory](#) isn't hard to find. Look for Red.

Paul and Dee's Great Italian Adventure

to the motor, for example. Another station might be to install the forks, another for the wiring harness, one for wheels, etc. Each station gets its own shopping cart for the assembly at that stage. Many of the components come partially assembled from outside suppliers, frames from Verlicchi, forks and shocks from Marzocchi, wheels from Marchesini with Pirelli tires already mounted and balanced, brakes from Brembo, etc.

After every bike is complete it is tested, not on a track but in a special test room. The room is sound proofed and ventilated and has rollers for the wheels. An operator mounts the bike, fires it up and puts it through the paces. Motor, gearbox, clutch and brakes, drive chain, suspension, gauges, lights, etc. If it passes this test it is prepped for shipping. All of this is done by hand, mind you. Of course, the machining of the raw engine castings uses computer controlled milling machines, but all the assembly that we saw is done by people. Livio told us Ducati has 1,100 employees at the plant.

At the end of the factory tour Livio gave us a special treat -- a visit to the MotoGP shop! This is normally strictly off limits to the usual visitor but Livio had asked for permission in advance of our visit. A benefit of Paul's past success as a Ducati racer. We can't give any details but we got to see the bikes being prepared for the Italian GP at Mugello in 10 days time. We saw the carbon-fiber-framed Desmosedici with its fairing off. Very cool.

2. The Ducati Museum

One of the important reasons for his trip was to see the plaque on the museum wall with Paul's name on it, along with Cook Neilson, Mike Hailwood and some others. There is a row of panels along the wall documenting Ducati's notable racing successes in many countries, starting back in the late 1940s. Paul won two AMA Superbike races, one in 1977 and one in 1978, and has his name on the wall for those years. Mike Hailwood is listed for winning the Isle of Man TT race and the TT World Championship in 1978. On the same panel!



[Famous names](#) – Cook Neilson at the top then Paul. In the center in bold is Mike Hailwood's name, winner of Ducati's first ever world championship. Paul appears again on the fourth line from the bottom.



Paul [sees the plaque](#) in the metal.

If you aren't up on motorcycle racing history you need to understand that in the mid-1960s Hailwood was the man to beat in European road racing and was one of Paul's early racing idols. Some people believe Hailwood to be the greatest motorcycle racer ever.

The museum celebrates the racing history of Ducati but there is some non-racing stuff near the museum entrance. There are displays of Ducati electric razors, radios, movie projectors and a few other things, all of which were

products Ducati made before World War II. After the war the company started making the Cucciolo, a motor that clipped onto a regular bicycle, then whole motorcycles and other motor powered items -- outboard boat motors and industrial diesel engines, for example.

When you enter the museum proper you see a long circular row of racing bikes from the earliest tiny singles up to the World Superbike and MotoGP winners from last year. Along the row there are theme rooms. There's a Mike Hailwood room, a MotoGP room, a Troy Bayliss room, an Imola 200 room, and so forth. The Bayliss room contains the Superman motif leathers he wore at one point. The actual bikes ridden to championships by the likes of Raymond Roche, Carl Fogarty, Troy Corser and Bayliss are all featured in the museum.



Pre-war [Ducati products](#) included electric razors, radio components and cameras.

Livio tells us that Ducati is negotiating to buy some more property and the plan for this new area includes a second museum dedicated to the production motorcycles. We hope it happens because it would be another excuse to visit Italy again.

More images from the Ducati Museum:



Ducati hasn't only road raced. Here's an [ice racer](#) from the 1980s.



One of the first Taglioni-designed race bikes, the [125cc Gran Sport](#).



The [Cucciolo](#), the 50cc clip-on motor that started Ducati as we know it today (bicycle extra).



[Casey Stoner's 2007 bike](#), the one that won the MotoGP World Title.



Ducati had Superman [leathers](#) made for Troy Bayliss.

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There is an entire wall of the [manufacturer trophies](#) from World Superbike and MotoGP.



Mike Hailwood, his dad and a mechanic pose with a special [250cc Desmo twin](#) Ducati built for him.



The [Ducati 1098R](#) that Troy Bayliss used to win his 3rd World Superbike title in 2008.



Another Ducati not a road race bike. This [Elefant](#) won the Paris-Dakar desert race.



One of the prettiest race bikes ever made, some say. The [175cc F3](#) with the "jelly mold" fuel tank.

3. Old Town Bologna

The next day we visit the old town. Bologna has been around a long time; it was an important crossroads in Roman times. Their University was founded in 1088 and still operates today. One of the city bus lines takes wheelchairs so we got a lift most of the way to the old center. The chief landmark of the old city are two medieval towers, the *Due Torri* (pronounced "due-ay tore-ee"). One of the towers soars high while the other is thicker and shorter. The taller tower looks straight but actually leans slightly. The shorter tower is noticeably tilted. They claim the lean angle is comparable to the lean of the more well-known tower in Pisa. The city once had 180 towers, which were built by wealthy families either for defense or as status symbols ("Mine is bigger"), or perhaps both. No one is quite sure.



[Due Torri](#). The short one leans more than the tower at Pisa.

The old city has two adjacent central squares, Piazza Maggiore and Piazza del Nettuno. The latter piazza contains the Neptune Fountain (1566). Piazza Maggiore fronts the Basilica of San Petronio, the patron saint of the city. Photos don't really do it justice; this building is huge! Most gothic cathedrals are built in the form of a Roman cross, with the long part called the nave and the shorter crossing section called the transept. The story is that San Petronio's nave was built first but the addition of the transept was halted when the Pope canceled financing, allegedly because the completed Basilica would have been larger than Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome. The upper facade is unfinished to this day. Even without the transept it's the 5th largest cathedral in the world, much longer than a football field and nearly 200 feet wide (132 x 60 meters). It can hold 28,000 people.



The [Neptune Fountain](#)



The unfinished façade of the [Basilica San Petronio](#)



San Petronio's [statue](#) on the city hall building

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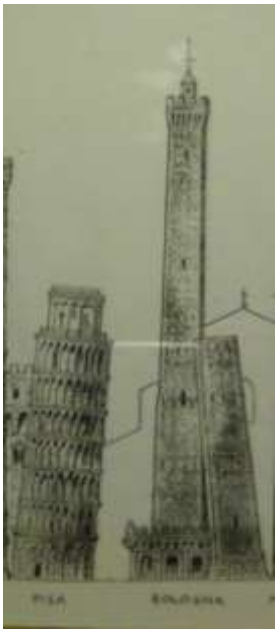
Another feature of Bologna is an extensive system of porticos, which make it possible to walk for long distances sheltered from rain, snow, or hot summer sun. The town is also quite proud of its culinary history, and some consider it the cuisine capital of Italy. It is famous for Bolognese ragù sauce and for processed meats -- they really do make baloney in Bologna!



One of Bologna's [long porticos](#)



The finished part of the [Basilica's façade](#) has white and pink marble.



A tower comparison, [Pisa versus Bologna](#).



A view of the back of the [Basilica San Petronio](#) from the table of an outdoor cafe.

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Some more Bologna images...



[Paul navigates](#) a portico.



[Narrow streets](#), old buildings, small cars and lots of scooters.



This [old building](#) in Piazza Maggiore contains shops and cafes



The [city hall](#) with the town clock tower just behind