

THE ARCHITECTURE



The Villa dei Vescovi seen from the west

The villa you are about to visit comprises 34 rooms, distributed across two stories, while the guest accommodation on the third floor contains two apartments, for those who like the idea of a relaxing break in these wonderful surroundings.

The Villa dei Vescovi was designed by the Veronese architect **Giovanni Maria Falconetto** (1468-1535) at the behest of the Bishop of Padua, Francesco Pisani (1494-1570), with the input of the noble humanist Alvise Cornaro (circa 1484-1566), a man of letters and the administrator of the diocese of Padua. Work began on the villa as we see it today in the spring of 1535, over existing Mediaeval and Renaissance structures: Falconetto had died a few months before, but the architectural orders betray typical elements of his style, which drew its inspiration from the ancient monuments of Verona. Entry to this “first” Villa dei Vescovi was via the south front - to the right of the current entrance - and along the side ran today’s loggias serving as belvederes, but not yet with their external staircases, while internal (now lost) staircases connected the ground and first floors. Designed to be the heart of the villa was a courtyard, as commonly found in ancient Roman houses.



DID YOU KNOW

According to learned 16th century Paduans, Luvigliano owes its name to the fact that it was the original site of the villa of Latin historian Livy, which was known as the *Livianum*. It was right here, with the Villa dei Vescovi, that the Veneto region saw a re-birth of architecture based on classical models. On the south front, which was the main entrance of the “first” villa, we can still see two stone benches next to the large archway, which is a specific throwback to the Roman *domus*.



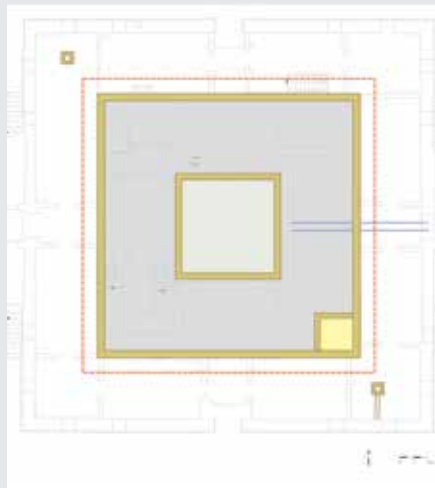
The basement of the Villa dei Vescovi



The southern facade of the Villa dei Vescovi with the stone benches

In the early 1540s, the man who commissioned the construction of the 16th century Villa dei Vescovi - the Bishop of Padua, Francesco Pisani - decided to dispense with the services of the man of letters and administrator of the local diocese, Alvise Cornaro, who had been directing the works up until then, replacing him in 1542 with **Giulio Romano** (1492 or 1499-1546), the architect of the Gonzaga family of Mantua and the person responsible for that city's celebrated Palazzo Te. Romano designed the imposing rusticated plinth - which gives the building great statuesque power - and also closed over the windows on the southern facade.

During the 1560s, the Istrian architect **Andrea da Valle** (first quarter of the 16th century-circa 1578) was called upon to transform the villa. On the western side, he built a new, square courtyard that connects to the *piano nobile* with a system of external staircases. With this contribution, Da Valle reversed the orientation of the building: entry from the south was abandoned, and the western front became the new main facade of the Villa dei Vescovi.



Hypothesis of the plan of the "first" Villa dei Vescovi



The external staircase of the Villa dei Vescovi



Neptune's grotto on the eastern facade of the Villa dei Vescovi



The eastern facade of the Villa dei Vescovi with the external staircase

In the late 1570s, the 16th century architect **Vincenzo Scamozzi**, a student of Andrea Palladio (1508-1580), designed the nymphaeum under the eastern side of the villa, which is dedicated to Neptune, the god of flowing water and of the sea. The upper stairs on the same side, for their part, were added in the 18th century, at the same time as the courtyard was eliminated and the long hall was opened up to connect the two loggias. *Scamozzi's cave is in need of restoration, which FAI is currently planning and to which each of you can actively contribute.*