



Palazzo Sansedoni

**Fontebranda**, Siena's oldest fountain, is the city's most renowned medieval water feature and its largest and most ancient spring. Constructed in the 13th century, Fontebranda showcases three striking Gothic arches and accommodates three reservoirs with distinct purposes: one for drinking water, another for livestock watering, and the third for clothes washing. This versatile structure served as a public laundry site and a crucial water source for the nearby artisans and tanners, who utilized its waters for their water-powered mills and slaughterhouses. Originating from the Bottini, an ancient aqueduct 25 kilometers underground, Fontebranda's water supply is a testament to Siena's historical ingenuity. Saint Catherine of Siena, recognized as the patron saint of Fontebranda, resided near its source. Nearby stands the Sanctuary of Santa Caterina da Siena.



**The Basilica of San Domenico** is significant partly because of its association with Santa Caterina da Siena. Built between 1226 and 1265, the Basilica has undergone numerous expansions and faced various challenges, including fires, military occupations, earthquakes, and alterations. Despite this, its Gothic style remains evident, with hints of Cistercian influence. The left side of the Basilica overlooks the square, contrasting with the convent rooms on the right. Its facade, adorned only by a rose window, is partially obscured by the Chapel of the Vaults, creating an unusual entrance on the left.



Externally, the bell tower, built in 1340, was lowered after the earthquake of 1798, and a crenelated crown was added during restoration. The complex also includes a fourteenth-century crypt that contains the relic of Saint Catherine's mummified head. Catherine of Siena died in 1380 at 33, weakened by her long fasts and the penances she inflicted on herself aimed at deepening her spiritual connection with Jesus Christ. She is buried in Rome at the Maria Sopra Minerva cemetery. In 1381, Pope Urban VI ordered the detachment of her head from her body, which was transferred to Siena. Initially stored in the sacristy of San Domenico, it was later placed in a chapel behind a grate, surrounded by frescoes depicting scenes from her life. Other relics include her finger, preserved in a shrine accessed from the facade's right side.

Entering the Basilica of San Domenico is a profoundly spiritual experience due to treasures such as Andrea Vanni's fresco of Santa Caterina, the only portrait of the Sienese Saint in the Basilica. Other notable works include Francesco di Giorgio's Adoration of the Child and Sodoma's The Ecstasy and The Fainting of St. Catherine. The left transept houses the Chapel with La Maestà by Guido da Siena, the master of Duccio di Boninsegni.







**The Fonte Gaia**, located in the upper part of Piazza del Campo, is the city's most crucial fountain. Initially built by Jacopo della Quercia in 1419, it replaced an earlier source dating back to 1346. The name "Fonte Gaia" commemorates the joyous celebration of the arrival of water to Piazza del Campo. The fountain features bas-reliefs depicting biblical scenes and Roman allegories, reflecting Siena's heritage. In the mid-19th century, a copy in Carrara marble was made by Tito Sarrocchi to replace the deteriorating original. After restoration, the original fountain is now housed in the Santa Maria della Scala Museum Complex.



**Santuario di Santa Caterina** was Saint Catherine's house and is seen as more representative of her life than a convent because she was part of the Third Order of Saint Dominic. Catherine lived at home but devoted herself to serving God. This way of life, known as "lay holiness," showed that anyone could live a holy life, no matter their daily life. This idea has attracted many followers since the 1200s. The shrine complex includes various sections: the Portico dei Comuni, two atriums, the Church of the Crucifix, the Confessional Chapel, and the Kitchen Oratory. A staircase also leads to the Oratory of the Bedroom on the floor below. Located in the Fontebranda district and once belonging to the wool workers' guild, this house was divided into three levels. In the early 14th century, it served as a warehouse for dyeing cloth and a home for Jacopo Benincasa, Catherine's father. After the Benincasa family's decline, the property changed hands

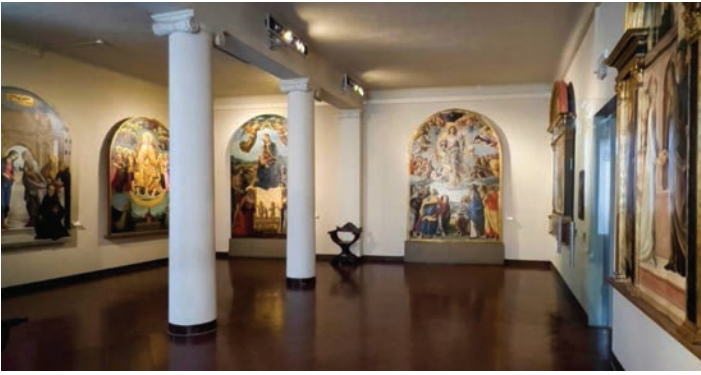
until 1466, when the commune of Siena purchased it to honor Catherine after her canonization. A lay confraternity dedicated to Catherine had already been established, fostering charity, penance, and worship. Through the efforts of these brothers and donations from devotees, the house evolved into a shrine adorned with artworks celebrating the Saint's life.



**The Teatro dei Roszi**, a hidden gem in the heart of Siena, is just a few steps from Piazza del Campo. Founded by a group of artisans in 1531 as the Congrega dei Roszi, it was established to honor popular art forms. By 1690, it had evolved into an academy and became one of Siena's leading cultural institutions. The congregation initially operated in the Saloncino within the Opera Metropolitana. However, after a ban by Francesco de' Medici, they commissioned architect Alessandro Doveri to build their own theater in 1807. Dissatisfied with the initial proposal, they purchased adjacent premises to the Accademia to create the new theater, which officially opened in the spring of 1815. The Teatro dei Roszi has been a hub for Italian prose, hosting well-known national tour companies. Despite several renovations and a closure period due to World War II damage, the theater reopened in 1998. Today, the theater, with 499 seats spread across stalls, three tiers of boxes, and an open balcony, continues offering various theatrical, musical, and conference events.

**The Pinacoteca Nazionale** is the primary state art museum in Siena, renowned for its extensive collection of masterpieces from the illustrious Sienese school of artists. Housed within the historic Palazzo Brigidi and Buonsignori, the museum offers visitors a comprehensive journey through the artistic heritage of Siena and its prominent role in Italian art history. The second floor highlights the Golden Age of Sienese Art, displaying works by Duccio di Buoninsegna, Simone Martini, and the Lorenzetti brothers, renowned for their elegant Madonnas. It progresses through Duccio's "Madonna dei Francescani," Martini's depictions of

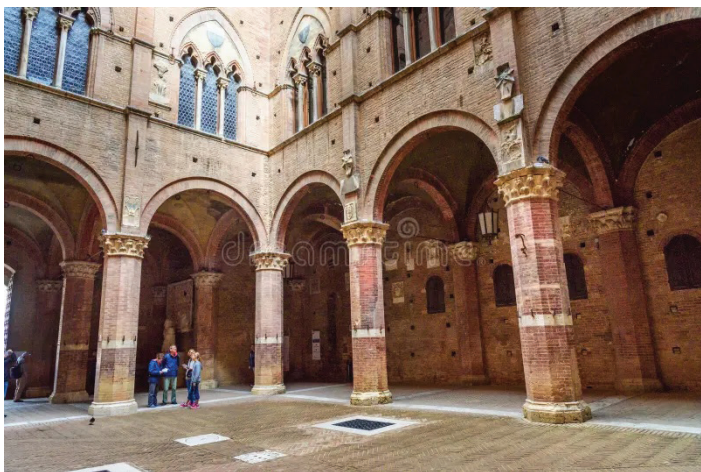




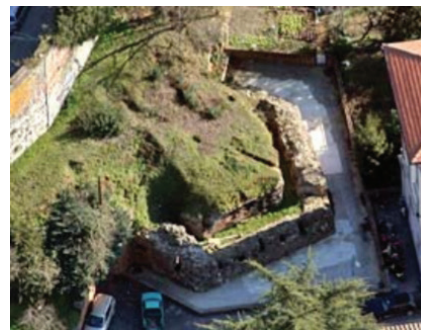
The Pinacoteca Nazionale

14th-century life, and the Lorenzetti's frescoes. The floor also features 15th-century pieces transitioning into the Renaissance, including works by Francesco di Giorgio Martini. On the first floor, 16th to 17th-century paintings by Domenico Beccafumi and Giovanni Antonio Bazzi, known as Sodoma, are showcased. Lastly, the top floor holds a small collection from the Spannocchi-Piccolomini families, featuring Albrecht Dürer's "San Girolamo."

**The Courtyard of the Podestà**, dating back to 1325, boasts an elegant brick colonnade supporting a floor adorned with large trifora windows. Also known as the 'Entrone,' it showcases ancient coats of arms belonging to past governors and remnants of stone statues by Giovanni Turino, representing the 'Mangia' and 'Wolf Feeding Twins,' symbols of Siena. Providing access to the Torre del Mangia tower and the Civic Museum, this courtyard is a central hub of activity, particularly during the Palio, when it is a resting place for horses before the race. Steeped in atmosphere, it holds the mystery of the 'Mangia,' named after Giovanni di Balduccio, the first bell-ringer, whose squandering of earnings led to his nickname. Eventually replaced by a mechanical clock and automaton, remnants preserved in the corner of the Entrone represent early workplace innovation.



**Porta Camollia** stands as one of Siena's oldest gates, its name intertwined with the legend of the city's foundation. Legend has it that in the 7th century BC, Romulus, the legendary founder of Rome, sent the leader Camullius to capture his nephews Senius and Ascanius. Camullius established his encampment where the present-day gate now stands, as evidenced by a document from 1082 referring to the "Porta di Camullia." At the apex of the gate, an inscription reads "Cor magis tibi Sena pandit," meaning "Siena opens your heart more than its door," paying homage to those who pass through it. This inscription was crafted to commemorate Ferdinando I dei Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany, entering the city. It was engraved in 1604, following the gate's reconstruction after its destruction in 1555 by the Medici army.



A short distance below, to the left of the gate, lie the remnants of the **Fortino delle Donne (Women's Fort)**, erected in 1526 after the Battle of Camollia between the Republic of

Siena and the Republic of Florence. This fortress was constructed by the women of Siena themselves. In a display of remarkable courage, three thousand Siennese women, led by noblewomen Livia Fausti, Fausta Piccolomini, and Laudomia Fonteguerri, organized into three groups comprising nobles and commoners. Armed with pickaxes, shovels, and bundles of wood sticks, they physically erected the fortification. The structure was designed to house both cannons and long guns, with a firing range spanning approximately 180 degrees, thus serving as a formidable artillery ready to defend the city's vulnerable northern flank. Despite the valiant resistance, Siena eventually succumbed; in 1555, the Florentines, in alliance with the imperial army, emerged victorious.