Smiling International School
An Extra Smile

IL PALIO DI FERRARA

MAY 2026

'Il Palio di Ferrara' is the oldest 'Palio' in the world dating back to 1259. This festival takes place every year to remember the extraordinary event that celebrated the crowning of Borso d'Este as the first Duke of Ferrara in 1471. It is a month of celebrations where the eight teams or 'Contrade' of the city compete in flag-throwing competitions, dances, parades and bareback horse races to win the precious banner dedicated to Saint George, the Patron Saint of Ferrara.

The following events are all free to watch except for the actual Palio races in Piazza Ariostea on Saturday 30th May. (You can buy tickets at the different entrances to the piazza).

The Blessing of the Games

Saturday 9th May at 4 pm
Ferrara's Cathedral

The blessing of the prizes and the votive offerings at Ferrara's Cathedral.

Historical Flag-Waving Competition

Saturday 16th May at 8.30 pm
Sunday 17th May at 4 pm
Piazza del Municipio

Each team puts on a flag-waving exhibition accompanied by Renaissance-style music. This is well-worth going to. Get there in plenty of time to get a good view.

Magnifico Corteo - Historical Street Parade by Night

Saturday 23rd May at 8.45 pm

An incredible historical procession of all the 'Contrade' sets off from Piazzale Medaglie d'Oro at 8.45 pm and parades along Corso Giovecca, to the corner of Castello Estense until it reaches Piazza Castello.
It feels as if you have stepped back in time! You can stand on the streets and watch the procession for free or wait in Piazza Castello for its arrival where each team enrols in the games and swears an oath to the Duke. It is one of the highlights of the Palio. Make sure you arrive there in plenty of time to get a good view.

Historical Procession and the Palio Races

Saturday 30th May at 8 pm
Piazza Ariostea

The month of celebrations comes to an end with this final event in Piazza Ariostea with four different races including a donkey and the famous horse race. The 'contrada' who has scored the most points during these races, the previous flag-waving and music contests, will be presented with the 'Palio' (fabric banner) and pronounced the winners of Ferrara's Palio 2026.

Official website: www.paliodiferrara.it
Email: info@paliodiferrara.it
Telephone: 0532 751263

Whilst every effort has been made to include accurate and up-to-date information, An Extra Smile is not responsible for any inaccuracies or changes in the programme of events, dates or times. We recommend that you always consult the official Palio website beforehand