

7.3 Bacino Porto Vecchio, Genoa.



or mass distribution centers. Genoa is playing an increasingly important role in and between the Mediterranean and other geopolitical areas, through trade and alliances. One of the most important is the cooperation agreement signed with Athens and Barcelona for 2004. At this time, Genoa will be the European City of Culture, Athens the site of the Olympic Games, and Barcelona the center of an important UNESCO initiative.

Genoa has a remarkable history. Established in Roman times, near the site of the present-day berthing structures, the township grew in the Middle Ages and settled into the coastal arc, which subsequently supported the first port and commercial uses. The town was an independent municipality in the eleventh century, established as an oligarchy republic. City life focused on maritime traffic and a powerful and rich noble class emerged, which governed and controlled the city's urban structure. The Genoese economy, linked to the sea, gave rise to an extensive seafaring culture. In fact, the Genoese were among the most important navigators of the period and were involved in some of the most important geographic discoveries. Columbus obviously heads the list. Thus, Genoa became one of the richest and most influential port cities in Europe. It was able to maintain its independence because of its great financial power, created as a result of cash loans and fleets chartered to the greatest European kingdoms.

With Genoa's increasing wealth, the city transformed from a township into a city. Palatial buildings often hosted visiting diplomats and monarchs. Parts of these still exist and are now under renovation. By the twelfth century, the curving stretch of the Ripa developed. During the thirteenth century, the port expanded with the construction of important operating structures, including the Darsena (dockyard), the Arsenale (navy yard), the Commenda, dry docks and new berths. These linked to the trade and commercial activities in the Ripa, at the water's edge. Stone quays were constructed to enclose the Mandraccio (inner harbor) and the Molo