



Built on the outskirts of Florence only a few minutes away from Hotel Orto dei Medici one can find the monumental complex of the **Fortezza da Basso**.

This splendid example of the celebrated Fortresses, built by the Sangallo family, never once attacked, has remained intact to this day.

It dates back to 1534, during the reign of Duke Alessandro and with the return to power in Florence of the Medici family after the dramatic siege of 1529-30 and was built in record time from a design by the great architect Antonio da Sangallo with the help of Pierfrancesco da Viterbo.

The Fortress, originally known as San Giovanni Battista, named after St. John the Baptist, the Patron Saint of the city, is also an exquisite example of Renaissance architecture.

The facade of the outer walls is carried out in round diamond-pointed projecting stone ashlar, perhaps inspired by the coat of arms of the Medici family, who ordered its construction. The interior is dominated by the majestic octagonal guard house covered with a dome and fortified terrace.

This broad building with powerful bastions bristling with turrets, is plentiful of narrow passages, parapet walks and secret passages. In the 1800's the Fortezza was elaborated with the construction of the stable and arms warehouse. Today the entrance is on viale Filippo Strozzi and is easily reached by an elevated pedestrian walkway.

At present it is the main exhibition center and home of the International Trade Fairs where events including the International Craftwork Exhibit, the series of Pitti Immagine events, the Furniture Exhibit, the International Exchange of Congress Tourism, Florence Gift Mart to Eurocamper, the International Exhibition of Crafts to Prato Expo, are held. Built on three floors, the new pavilion, usually used for these events, was designed by architect Pierluigi Spadolini and inaugurated in 1977.

Erected in the center of the great square inside the Fortress, the Pavilion is surrounded by

ancient buildings that are in the process of being gradually restored: the Theatrino Lorenese, and the Palazzo delle Nazioni. Since the great flood of 1966, the large buildings on the southern side have held restoration Laboratories involved in the project.