

Villa Capra, or Villa Rotunda Commentary

Situated on the top of a hill just outside the town of Vicenza, the Villa Capra is called the Villa Rotonda, because of its completely symmetrical plan with a central circular hall. The building has a square plan with loggias on all four sides, which connect to terraces and the landscape. At the centre of the plan, the two-storey circular hall with overlooking balconies was intended by Palladio to be roofed by a semi-circular dome. However, after his death, a lower dome was built, designed by Vincenzo Scamozzi and modelled after the Pantheon with a central oculus originally open to the sky. The proportions of the rooms are mathematically precise, according to the rules Palladio describes in the *Quattro Libri*.

The building is rotated 45 degrees to south on the hilltop, enabling all rooms to receive some sunshine. The villa is asymmetrically sited in the topography, and each loggia, although identical in design, relates to the landscape it enfronts differently through variations of wide steps, retaining walls and embankments. Thus, the symmetrical architecture in asymmetrical relationship to the landscape intensifies the experience of the hilltop.

The northwest loggia is set recessed into the hill above an axial entry from the front gate. This axis is flanked by a service building and continues visually to a chapel at the edge of the town, thus connecting villa and town. — JY

The Creator's Words

"The place is nicely situated and one of the loveliest and most charming that one could hope to find; for it lies on the slopes of a hill, which is very easy to reach. The loveliest hills are arranged around it, which afford a view into an immense theatre. . . ; because one takes pleasure in the beautiful view on all four sides, loggias were built on all four facades."





