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'An open-air theatre' is how Francesca Colombo, managing and cultural director of Biblioteca degli Alberi Milano (Library of Trees Milan), describes the vast urban park in the city's Porta Nuova district. It's an area that has seen huge regeneration over the last few years. Occupying over 24 acres, this green space harbours over 100 botanical species and 135,000 plants, creating a diverse urban ecosystem that attracts pollinators and serves as a breeding ground for birds including moorhens, peregrine falcons, blackbirds and sparrows. Yet BAM, as it's known, is no ordinary urban park. It's also a thriving cultural and social hub with an extensive programme of events. 'BAM is a place where nature and culture converge, offering experiences that can be enjoyed by everyone – with all events free of charge. Our aim is to strengthen social ties and foster a deep sense of community,' explains Francesca. At the circular play area surrounded by a ring of weeping willows, families from a myriad of backgrounds come together.

'Kids are our favourite audience,' reveals Francesca. 'Children come to learn about vegetables, flowers and plants through activities and workshops designed to bring little ones closer to nature and inspire them to care for the environment.' Themes include food waste, recycling and the importance of bees. There are also botanical walks led by agronomists. 'Several events are held in English, although the majority use the universal language of music and dance – a language of culture that is understood by all,' Francesca explains. At the 2024 edition of the

THE
HOT
LIST

Parks and RECREATION

We explore the green lung at the heart of Milan's urban regeneration plan

Words: KIKI DEERE



Above: The team at BAM is proud to offer Milan free culture, as well as nature, with open-air theatre and circus events. Right: An aerial view of the park

annual Back to the City Concert, young musicians, from the age of seven and over, came together to perform alongside renowned artists. Another highlight is BAM Circus in May – an open-air gathering of street artists, magicians and contortionists.

With all events masterminded by BAM's small 12-strong team, each is meticulously thought out to harness the power of community. Since 2019, BAM has hosted over 2,000 events involving more than 100,000 children. In short, BAM has become a playground for the imagination.

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