



CICERONI
T R A V E L

ELEGANCE PERSONIFIED TURIN & THE HOUSE OF SAVOY

TUESDAY 11 – SATURDAY 16 JUNE 2024 (6 DAYS)

LECTURER: TOM DUNCAN

£2465

- Visit Turin, Italy's most elegant post-Renaissance city
- Combine wonderful architecture, fine art & the very best of local food & wine
- Remarkable masterpieces by the architects Guarini & Juvarra in a blend of late Baroque, Rococo & Neo-classical magnificence
- Superb collections of paintings in two major galleries
- See the three finest of the newly restored eighteenth century royal Hunting Villas built on Turin's outskirts
- Private visit and lunch to see a wonderful art collection on the Italian/Swiss border



Juvarra's Great Hall, La Venaria Reale, Turin

OVERVIEW

The Duchy of Savoy was an independent state from medieval times, set dramatically astride the Alps and wedged between Italy and France, thus drawing on both cultural traditions in all aspects of life and art. Its ruling family, the House of Savoy, was connected to most of the royal dynasties of Europe, particularly the Bourbons and Habsburgs. Turin became the Duchy's capital in the sixteenth century and from 1720 it metamorphosed into the capital of the freshly minted Kingdom of Sicily/Savoy, which in time was 'upgraded' as the Kingdom of Sardinia. In the nineteenth century the Savoy dynasty provided Italy with its new monarchy and for a brief period Turin was the capital of the newly unified Italian state, to be succeeded by Florence and then Rome.

That said, it is the natural wealth of what is today Piedmont that has proved to be its greatest attraction. Fertile valleys watered by fresh Alpine streams mean that the food and wine of this area are renowned, none more so than in late autumn, when the hunt for local truffles is at its height. Allied to this was, and is, a reputation for dignified civility. It was to Turin, set picturesquely on the banks of the River Po, that many a Grand Tourist came to learn manners and 'correct behaviour' in the city's Academy, before launching themselves nervously upon the wider Italian scene in Venice, Florence and Rome.

Turin itself is a city of striking beauty. Its historic centre, built on an ancient Roman template, was laid out as a series of wide streets and airy piazzas, most of which have perfectly beautiful arcades protecting the elegant locals from all weathers. Between 1650 and 1740 the dynasty and city were amply served by two of the finest architects of the time: Guarino Guarini who worked in the baroque style, and his more restrained classical successor, Filippo Juvarra. These two men, the greatest Italian architects of their generation, are the main creative forces we shall encounter as we move through city streets and explore the surrounding countryside.

We shall be based at the comfortable 4* Grand Hotel Sitea, ideally placed in the city centre. It offers easy access on foot to all the city's buildings and collections of note and is set in the midst of Turin's excellent shopping area.

ITINERARY OUTLINE

Day 1: Tuesday 11 June – We arrive at Milan Malpensa Airport mid-afternoon and transfer directly to Turin and our hotel, the 4* Grand Hotel Sitea. We have dinner in our hotel – wine, water and coffee are included with all group lunches and dinners.

Day 2: Wednesday 12 June – We begin with an introductory walk through the historic heart of the city. **Turin** was founded in 28 BC by Augustus and the city's grid-like street system is but one indication of its ancient Roman origins. We see first some remains from the city's Roman past and then visit the renaissance **Cathedral**, a delightful

building of 1491 by the Tuscan, Meo del Capriono. Attached to it is the famous **Chapel of the Holy Shroud**, a fine work by Guarino Guarini of 1667 to 1690, the interior of which we shall see the following morning. Nearby is the superb church of **San Lorenzo**, also by Guarini (1624 – 1683), and dating from 1667 which we shall also visit. Following a group lunch, we return to Piazza Castello to visit **Palazzo Madama**, home to a remarkable collection of paintings and decorative arts. The oldest parts of the building incorporate both ancient Roman and later medieval structures, while in the eighteenth century a stunning facade and new ceremonial staircase was added to the palazzo by Filippo Juvarra (1678 – 1736) in 1718 - 1721. The evening will be free.

Day 3: Thursday 13 June – This morning we visit the **Palazzo Reale**, much of it decorated under the influence of Marie Christine of Savoy, sister of Louis XIII of France. The interiors are mostly from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and contain fine furniture and tapestries. Our visit allows to visit the interior of the **Chapel of the Holy Shroud**. After a coffee break, our final visit of the day will focus on the renowned paintings collection of the **Galleria Sabauda** housed within the Palazzo Reale. The collection is undoubtedly one of the unknown gems amongst Italy's art galleries. It is especially rich in Flemish and Dutch works as these have come from the holdings of Prince Eugene of Savoy, the great military commander of the early eighteenth century. There are also some stunning paintings by Mantegna, Rubens, Van Dyck, Bellotto and Batoni, amongst many others. The group will be free from lunchtime onwards, but there is plenty of interest within easy reach. For example, there is the recently reorganised **Egyptian Museum**, considered one of the finest in the world. The evening will be free.

Day 4: Friday 14 June – Today and tomorrow will focus on the villas of the Savoy dynasty situated just beyond the centre of the city. We drive to the northern outskirts of Turin to the village of **La Venaria** to visit the splendidly restored interiors of **La Venaria Reale**. This spectacular country palace and royal hunting lodge (never completed) was once the pride and joy of the Savoy dynasty and reflected their ambitions as dukes and kings. We shall have a group lunch next to the palace. In the afternoon we drive to the hilltop **Basilica of La Superga**. Built between 1717 and 1731 as a thanksgiving for Turin's delivery from a French invasion, it is Juvarra's finest work and offers extraordinary views over the plain towards the nearby Alps. We return to the hotel. The evening will be free.

Day 5: Saturday 15 June – Today we travel to the southern suburbs to visit the wonderful hunting villa built for the Savoy family at **Stupinigi**, known as the **Palazzina di Caccia**. Built for Victor Amadeo II in 1729 by Juvarra, it is an exquisite ensemble that blends unusual architectural forms (in plan, it resembles a butterfly!) with fine frescoes and stucco ornaments. We travel by coach back into the city centre and there will be time for an early lunch (not included) in Piazza Vittoria Veneto. In the afternoon, we drive just beyond the River Po to visit **Villa della Regina**, a miniature masterpiece set within a perfectly restored formal garden, all inspired by Versailles. Late afternoon there will be some free time and that evening we have our final dinner in a good local restaurant.

Day 6: Sunday 16 June – Leaving Turin, we travel to within a few kilometres of the Swiss border to visit a **private villa** whose owner is a renowned collector of Lombard Old Masters and works of art. The sixteenth century villa is set within a charming garden set against wonderful vistas of the surrounding hills that mark the border between Italy and Switzerland. Within the villa we shall see some wonderful paintings and an enviable collection of decorative arts and furniture. Our host will entertain us over a buffet lunch, after which we travel by coach the short distance to Milan Malpensa and our late-afternoon flight to London Heathrow.

PRACTICALITIES

Price £2465

Price without flights £2295

Deposit £350

Single Supplement £235 (Double for Sole Use, Classic Room)

Room Upgrades On request

Hotel 5 nights with breakfast at the 4* Grand Hotel Sitea

Flights British Airways

Outward: **BA584** Depart London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **1220**, arrive Milan Malpensa **1525**

Return: **BA567** Depart Milan Malpensa **1820**, arrive London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **1925**

Price includes 2 dinners & 3 lunches with wine, water & coffee, all local transfers, entry fees & gratuities, services of Tom Duncan & our local tour manager James Hill

Not included Travel to/from Heathrow, 3 dinners & 2 lunches



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