



CICERONI
T R A V E L

ELEGANCE PERSONIFIED TURIN & THE HOUSE OF SAVOY

MONDAY 26 – FRIDAY 30 NOVEMBER 2018 (5 DAYS)

LECTURER: TOM DUNCAN

£1765

- Visit Turin, Italy's most elegant post-Renaissance city, decorated for the pre-Christmas festivities
- Combine wonderful architecture, fine art and the very best of local food and wine
- Remarkable masterpieces by the architects Guarini and Juvarra in a blend of late Baroque and early Rococo magnificence
- Superb collections of paintings
- See the four finest of the newly restored eighteenth century Hunting Villas built for the House of Savoy on Turin's outskirts



Villa della Regina, Turin

OVERVIEW

The Duchy of Savoy was an independent state from the Middle Ages, 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 French Bourbons. Turin became the Duchy's capital in the sixteenth century and from 1720 it became the capital of the new Kingdom of Savoy, which metamorphosed in time into the Kingdom of Sardinia. In the nineteenth century the Savoy dynasty gave Italy its new monarchy and for a brief period Turin was the capital of the newly unified Italian state.

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 steams 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 was laid out as a series of wide streets and airy piazzas, most of which have perfectly beautiful arcades protecting the elegant inhabitants 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 creative forces we shall encounter as we move through city streets and 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 the city's excellent central shopping area.

ITINERARY OUTLINE

Day 1: Monday 26 November – On arrival at Turin Airport, we transfer directly to our hotel, the 4* Grand Hotel Sitea. That evening we have dinner in our hotel – wine, water and coffee are included with all group lunches and dinners.

Day 2: Tuesday 27 November – We start our first full day in **Turin** 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. We may see only the exterior as the chapel, badly damaged by fire in 1997, is still under restoration. Nearby is the superb church of **San Lorenzo**, also by Guarini, and dating from 1667.

We break for a group lunch and continue to **Palazzo Madama**. 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. Following a long restoration the palace is now open and is the home of a remarkable collection of paintings and decorative arts. We return to our hotel and the evening will be free.

Day 3: Wednesday 28 November – We travel by coach immediately beyond the River Po to visit an exquisite villa, the **Villa della Regina**, a miniature masterpiece set within a perfectly restored formal garden, all inspired by Versailles. We continue to the nearby hilltop **Basilica of La Superga**, where we break for coffee. Built between 1717 and 1731 as a thanksgiving for delivery from a French invasion, it is Juvarra's finest work.

We return to the grandest piazza in Turin – **Piazza Vittorio Veneto**, for our lunch break (not included). We end our day by driving 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 with fine frescoes and stuccoes. The evening will be free.

Day 4: Thursday 29 November – This morning we walk the short distance to the **Palazzo Reale**, much of it decorated under the influence of Marie Christine of Savoy, sister of Louis XIII of France. The interiors are of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and contain fine furniture and tapestries. After a coffee break we continue to visit the renowned paintings collection of the **Galleria Saubada** housed within the Palazzo Reale. The collection is undoubtedly one of the unknown gems amongst Italy's fine collection of 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 (including his finest portrait of the Children of Charles I), 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 newly displayed **Egyptian Museum**, considered one of the finest in the world. There will be ample time for those who would like to do some Christmas shopping in the elegant arcaded streets that stretch in all directions from Piazza San Carlo. That evening, we have dinner in one of Turin's more renowned restaurants.

Day 5: Friday 30 November – On our final day we leave our hotel and drive northwards to visit the **Castello Ducale di Agliè** located off the old road connecting Turin to the Val D'Aosta in the Alps. Built in its current form by the Marquises of San Martino, the Savoy Duke of Chiabrese acquired the estate in the mid eighteenth century and radically transformed the castle using a suitably ostentatious ensemble combining stucco and painting.

This theme continues after our final group lunch at the splendidly restored **La Venaria Reale** where we end our week of visits 'in triumph'. This spectacular country palace and hunting lodge was once the pride and joy of the Savoy dynasty and reflected their ambition as they strode forth as marquises, dukes and kings. After our visit we travel the very short distance to Turin airport and our return flight to Gatwick.

PRACTICALITIES

Price £1765

Price without flights £1640

Deposit £275

Single Supplement £120 (Double for Sole Use)

Hotel 4 nights with breakfast at the 4* Grand Hotel Sita

Flights British Airways

Outward: **BA2578** Depart London Gatwick (South Terminal) **1530**, arrive Turin **1830**

Return: **BA2579** Depart Turin **1915**, arrive London Gatwick (South Terminal) **2020**

Price includes 2 dinners & 2 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 Gatwick, 2 dinners & 2 lunches



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