

- **Discover the world of Renaissance patronage & the ruling Visconti and Sforza dynasties**
- **We explore the great collections of important Milanese families from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries**
- **Superbly located hotels in both Milan and Cremona**
- **Visit the splendid, undiscovered city of Cremona, with its age-old craft of instrument-making explored, with private recitals**



Leonardo da Vinci, *The Last Supper*

## OVERVIEW

Milan and Cremona could not be more different in scale and ambience – Milan is the centre of Italy's mercantile and banking traditions; Cremona is an oasis of musical endeavour, devoted to the finest traditions of craftsmanship. They offer a remarkable juxtaposition in terms of their physical scale and cultural history and are the two most interesting cities in Lombardy.

Under the Romans Milan became a major settlement at the centre of a vital road network, eventually capital of the Western Roman Empire and an important Christian centre under St Ambrose. Thereafter, Lombardy, as it came to be known, was occupied by many of the German and other tribes who crossed over the Alps. As the outline of Medieval Italy emerged, Milan became an independent Duchy under the feudal control of the new, Holy Roman Empire, an entity dominated by mostly German dynasties.

Cremona's early history was chequered. Destroyed both by the Romans and Lombards it was later revived as a free commune. Though it fought against its Milanese neighbours, it eventually became a part of the Duchy of Milan, after which it enjoyed several centuries of prosperity. Meanwhile the Visconti Dukes of Milan dominated local affairs and became major patrons of the arts, creating a court of unrivalled wealth and beauty. By 1450 they were succeeded by the Sforza family who continued these traditions until they were expelled by the French in 1498, who claimed Milan as their own, ending the city's role as a centre of Renaissance excellence.

For about a hundred years the Milanese Court employed an extraordinary range of architects, sculptors, painters, musicians and humanists. Above all there was Leonardo da Vinci, some of whose major works will be seen, including the Last Supper. Milan's museums are amongst Italy's finest and we shall visit both the Brera and the Ambrosiana. The 'connoisseur' collections at the Museo Poldi Pezzoli, the Villa Necchi-Campiglia and Casa Bagatti-Valsecchi are truly sophisticated. We shall also visit the finest collection of historic keyboard instruments in private Italian hands for a recital followed by dinner, hosted by the owner.

Cremona, renowned for making luxury goods and superb stringed instruments, is best remembered as the home of the world's most famous violin maker, Antonio Stradivarius. Indeed, families of craftsmen such as the Amati, the Guarneri and the Stradivari produced the finest instruments of their kind over a lengthy period in the city. Our time in Cremona will include not only all the major public monuments and galleries, but also privileged access to the famous Museo del Violino, to include a private recital on one of its wonderful Stradivarius instruments.

We stay in two very well-placed hotels. Milan's 4\* **Superior Hotel de La Ville** close to the Duomo, Teatro La Scala and the main shopping districts; whilst the 4\* **Hotel Impero** is close by Cremona's resplendent cathedral.

## ITINERARY OUTLINE

**Day 1:** Saturday 18 November – We fly from Heathrow to **Milan Linate**, arriving early afternoon. Once checked into our hotel, the **4\* Hotel de La Ville**, we visit the **Duomo**, the city's Gothic cathedral. In the evening, we have a group dinner in an excellent restaurant – water, wine and coffee are included with all group meals.

**Day 2:** Sunday 19 November – We begin at the church of **San Satiro**, where Bramante was involved as a modifying architect, his contribution an extraordinary choir which is a triumph of illusionism. We continue to the museum within **Castello Sforzesco**, a magnificent fortress which incorporates military and palatial quarters including spaces designed and decorated by Leonardo. After a group lunch we visit **Santa Maria della Grazie**, Milan's finest Renaissance church, modified by Bramante. In its former refectory we shall also see Leonardo da Vinci's **Last Supper**, justly regarded as the first work of the High Renaissance. The evening will be free.

**Day 3:** Monday 20 November – Our half day of visits begins at the **Basilica of Sant' Ambrogio**, one of the great early churches of Italy. Romanesque in design, its interior contains some remarkable objects. We continue to the **Poldi Pezzoli Museum**, the private house of a famous nineteenth century collector, where the rooms are displayed as he left them. Lunch (not included) and the remainder of the afternoon and evening will be free

**Day 4:** Tuesday 21 November – The **Ambrosiana Gallery** has a remarkable collection of paintings, including several works by, or associated with, Leonardo. We continue to the **Brera Picture Gallery** with fine works from the north Italian schools such as Mantegna, Bellini and the great Venetian artists. After lunch (not included), we visit the Neo-renaissance **Casa Bagatti-Valsecchi** containing a fine collection covering four centuries. That evening we shall be the guests of Signora Fernanda Giulini to view her astonishing collection of historic keyboard instruments - psalteries, spinets and harpsichords. After a guided visit and recital, we have dinner in the house.

**Day 5:** Wednesday 22 November – Our final morning in Milan focuses on **Villa Necchi-Campiglia**. Its collection of early twentieth century furniture and paintings are complemented by eighteenth century decorative arts and paintings. We leave Milan to drive to **Cremona**. After checking into our hotel and a group lunch we explore **Piazza del Comune**. The square presents a rich panorama of Romanesque and later architecture, dominated by the **Torrizzo**, one of the highest Medieval towers of Europe. The adjacent **Duomo** is a wonderful Romanesque church with a very ornate west front, behind which lies a marvellous frescoed interior. The newly restored **Baptistry** is one of Lombardy's finest. After our visit the evening will be free.

**Day 6:** Thursday 23 November – **Palazzo Affaitati** is Cremona's **Pinacoteca** with a wide range of Lombard artists represented. The new **Museo del Violino** is an interactive and well-presented investigation into the history of Cremonese lute and violin making. It houses violins crafted by **Stradivarius**, one of which will be played for us privately! After a break for lunch (not included) we end our day with a fascinating visit to the workshop of the master violin maker and restorer, **Philippe Devanneaux** who will enlighten us on the craft of violin making. The remainder of the afternoon will be free and later that evening there will be a final group dinner.

**Day 7:** Friday 24 November – We make our way to the delightful town of **Crema**, pausing at the fine monastery of **San Sigismondo** where busy fresco cycles show off the neglected talents of two local painters, Bernardo and Giulio Campi. Just outside Crema is the organ maker **Tamburi** where we investigate organ making in their workshop. **Piazza del Duomo** in Crema is a good spot for lunch (not included) with a charming **Duomo** which we shall visit. We then make the short journey to **Milan Linate** airport and our early evening flight home.

## PRACTICALITIES

**Price** £2345    **Price without flights** £2195    **Deposit** £300

**Single Supplement** £349 (Double for Sole Use) or £299 (Single room)

**Hotel** 4 nights with Breakfast at 4\* Hotel De La Ville, Milan and 2 nights at the 4\* Hotel Impero, Cremona

**Flights** British Airways

Outward: **BA588** Depart London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **1025** arrive Milan Linate **1325**

Return: **BA569** Milan Linate **1850** arrive London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **1955**

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

**Not included.** Travel to & from Heathrow, 3 Dinners & 4 Lunches



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