

## PRINCES, PAINTERS & SEA MERCHANTS: GENOA & THE ITALIAN RIVIERA

MONDAY 25 – SATURDAY 30 MAY 2020 (6 DAYS)

LECTURER: HUGH MAGUIRE

£2270

- **Inspiring visit to Genoa, a fusion of Medieval, Renaissance & Baroque influence**
- **Genoa's long trading links with Antwerp captured through paintings by Rubens & Van Dyck in the city's palaces**
- **The most important gardens of the Italian Riviera included - La Mortola, Ventimiglia & La Cervara at Portofino**
- **Private visits to palaces & private villas and gardens in both the city & the Riviera**
- **Excellent food based on Ligurian cuisine**



Genoa

### OVERVIEW

Out of the chaos of the broken Roman Empire in the west there emerged individual city-states, many of which made use of their geographical position to grow wealthy. Some developed a military role, others preferred trade. Indeed, the wealth of medieval Italy depended on trade, much of it sea-based. This was controlled by the four “Republics of the Sea”: Venice, Amalfi, Pisa and Genoa. Genoa was early in the rush to control trading routes between east and west and its great rival in this struggle was Venice. The two cities had strong links with both Byzantine Constantinople and the Islamic Levant and, just as in Venice, these varied eastern links are reflected in Genoa's superb architecture.

Over subsequent centuries, the riches accumulated by the great merchant dynasties who controlled the city's fortunes – the Doria, Pallavicini, Spinola, Grimaldi, Durazzo, Lomellino and the like – were invested in great palaces decorated with magnificent frescoes and full of works of art. In this respect, Genoa has a range of princely residences far grander than either of its more famous neighbours, Turin and Milan, and indeed they are the equal of those in Venice. These date from the Medieval and Renaissance periods and on into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when Genoa, like Venice, had to look to alternative sources of income.

This was due to the change in Mediterranean trading patterns initiated by the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453. While Venice developed a land-based agricultural empire, Genoa extended its trading links with northern Europe. It found the perfect partner in Antwerp, the leading port of the Spanish Netherlands. Why Antwerp?

Simply put, northern Europe had an insatiable appetite for the luxurious silks and velvets which Genoa then produced, much of it exported directly to Antwerp for onward sale. These trading links explain why both Rubens and Van Dyck used Genoa as their Italian ‘base’ during their extended Italian sojourns. It also accounts for the unexpected numbers of paintings by Flemish masters, particularly Rubens and Van Dyck, to be found in Genoa.

Our visit will introduce you to Genoa and the splendours of this once great city-state. Like Venice, Genoa has a remarkable selection of buildings across many periods including magnificent private palaces, richly endowed and decorated churches, all sited in public spaces of elegant dignity, set within a contained historical centre. In addition to all this architecture and art, there are a surprising number of gardens of great magnificence. Some are close to the city such as the Abbazia La Cervara near Portofino; others are at some distance, above all the wonderful Hanbury Garden at La Mortola, set by the French border at Ventimiglia.

We shall stay at the charming **4\* Hotel Bristol Palace**. This is an excellently located central hotel with large, comfortable public rooms and a small, delightful café/restaurant which serves light lunches and suppers. All the bedrooms are large, have high ceilings and are surprisingly quiet for a city centre hotel.

### ITINERARY OUTLINE

**Day 1:** Monday 25 May – We fly from London Gatwick to Genoa arriving mid-morning. It is a short journey into Genoa to check into our hotel. After some free time for lunch, not included, we have an **Introductory Walk**. The

**Ducal Palace** is Medieval in origin and was the residence of the city's ducal rulers, the Doges. It is now a cultural centre. Genoa's **Duomo** is a fascinating mix, combining Medieval origins with later Renaissance internal alterations. It contains a wonderful Rubens altarpiece and an excellent treasury which we shall visit. Rubens also painted in the nearby **Church of the Gesù**. We end our initial exploration with a visit to **San Matteo**, set in a lovely piazza, the parish church of the Doria family who commissioned many changes and embellishments. We return to our hotel and an early group dinner in its restaurant – wine, water and coffee are included in all group dinners and lunches.

**Day 2:** Tuesday 26 May – Our day will be spent along **Via Garibaldi**, *THE* place to live in Renaissance times, now lined with palace after palace of great beauty. We shall visit **Palazzo Bianco**, **Palazzo Rosso** and **Palazzo Dorio Tursi** - the first two have splendid collections of paintings and the third is now the magnificent Town Hall. After a group lunch we continue on to **Palazzo Lomellino** for a private visit of the *piano nobile* and its garden. We also plan to visit one of the great palaces with truly remarkable interiors, not open to the public. The evening will be free.

**Day 3:** Wednesday 27 May – We begin our morning's activities at **San Donato**, which has a stunning altarpiece by Joos van Cleve, one of the first Flemings to be recorded working in Genoa. We continue to **Palazzo Spinola**, one of the highlights of the week, which will come as a marvellous revelation given the quality of its collections. It is one of only a handful of princely residences to survive with its collections intact – paintings by, for example, Van Dyck; superb textiles, porcelain and furniture. We end our morning along Via Balbi at **Palazzo Reale**. Built for the Balbi family and sold to the Durazzos, this handsome palace became the property of the House of Savoy in the nineteenth century. Fine interiors display ravishing paintings, frescoed rooms and furniture from different periods. Lunch is not included and the remainder of the afternoon and evening will be free.

**Day 4:** Thursday 28 May – This morning we drive eastwards, where we pause for coffee in the sophisticated resort of **Portofino**. Delightful, colourful houses cluster round the small port in one of the great visual vignettes of the Riviera, if not Italy. Our focus today is a visit to the magnificent **Abbazia La Cervara**, a combination of medieval and later elements, now privately owned, where a series of sophisticated garden areas link together the historic buildings overlooking the sea. We continue to the coastal village of **Sori** for a private lunch and visit at the villa home of a prominent Milanese family. After a delightful day, we return to our hotel after which the evening will be free.

**Day 5:** Friday 29 May – Today we drive westwards along the Mediterranean coast, beyond **Ventimiglia**, to the famous **La Mortola** (the name derives from thickets of wild myrtle on the site), created by the Hanbury family over many decades. Now in the care of the University of Genoa, it is once again a beacon of horticultural excellence. The garden is perched dramatically above the coastline and contains an extraordinarily rich variety of plantings, ranging from rare succulents to wonderful roses – all possible due to the varied site levels on which they are planted. After a light group buffet lunch on site within the garden, there will be some free time to enjoy its spaces. In the afternoon we return to Genoa where later in the evening we have our final group dinner in one of the city's historic restaurants.

**Day 6:** Saturday 30 May – On the way to the airport we shall visit the famed **Villa del Principe**, the great home of Genoa's most important family, the Doria. Its most famous member was the sixteenth century Admiral, Andrea Doria. The villa has fine frescoed spaces with tapestries and pictures - a fitting climax to our Genoese stay. We continue the short distance to the airport and our departure at lunchtime to London's Gatwick airport

## PRACTICALITIES

**Price** £2270 **Without Flights** £2095 **Deposit** £295 **Single Supplement** £335 (Classic Double for Sole Use)

**Hotel** 5 nights with breakfast in the 4\* Hotel Bristol Palace

**Hotel Upgrade** Two sharing are in Superior Bedrooms: Upgrade to Deluxe £110 (per room, sharing)

Upgrade to Superior £110 (Double for Sole Use, per room, in addition to Single Supplement)

Upgrade to Deluxe £220 (Double for Sole Use, per room, in addition to Single Supplement)

**Flights** British Airways

Outward: **BA2688** Depart London Gatwick (South) **0750** arrive Genoa **1100**

Return: **BA2689** Depart Genoa **1255** arrive London Gatwick (South) **1410**

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

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



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