

TURIN YESTERDAY, TODAY, ALWAYS EVOLVING



Dear CIRP friends,

Below you will find a selection of information, anecdotes and historical notes about our city and its most beautiful landmarks. This is not intended as a tourist guide, but rather as a collection of insights designed to offer you a first impression and help you better appreciate what we will discover together.

Silvia, Barbara and Emanuela

FROM AUGUSTA TAURINORUM TO TURIN, A JOURNEY THROUGH MORE THAN 2,000 YEARS OF HISTORY

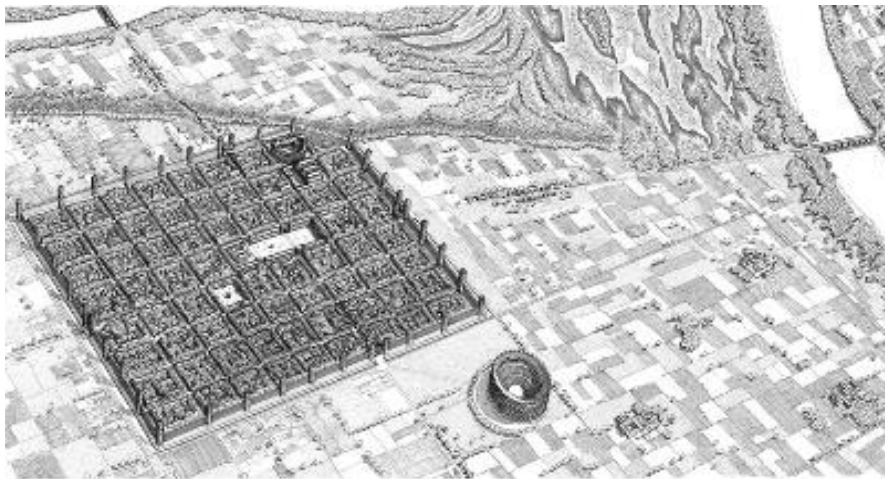
Imagine walking through the streets of Turin: every stone and every façade tell a chapter of a story that began thousands of years ago.

Long before the elegant palaces were built, these lands were inhabited by the **Taurini**, a Celtic-Ligurian people. According to tradition, the symbol of the bull (*toro* in Italian means bull and derives from the Latin *taurus*) originates from this proud population, which resisted the advance of the Carthaginian general Hannibal when, in 218 BC, he crossed the Alps with 37 elephants and his army in his campaign to conquer the Italian peninsula.



Modern Turin officially came into being around **28 BC**, when Octavian Augustus, Julius Caesar's adopted son and the first Roman emperor, founded **Augusta Taurinorum** (literally, "the Augusta of the Taurini"). The Romans designed the city according to a grid layout, the famous "Quadrilatero Romano", with straight, symmetrical streets. We can still touch this past today thanks to the **Porta Palatina**, whose imposing towers rise above the city, bearing witness to a time when Turin was a strategic outpost on the route to Gaul (modern-day France).

But Roman life was not made up solely of defensive walls and soldiers. Just a short distance from the Porta Palatina, the remains of the Roman Theatre and the traces of the Amphitheatre remind us that the city was also a centre of culture and entertainment. As you stroll today through the narrow streets of the Quadrilatero Romano, you are quite literally walking above the ancient tiers where, two thousand years ago, crowds once gathered for grand public spectacles.



Over the centuries, the city evolved into a medieval fiefdom, but the true turning point came in 1563, when the House of Savoy – one of the longest-standing European dynasties – moved its capital from Chambéry (France) to Turin. From that moment on, the city began to clothe itself in Baroque style, a new artistic language whose purpose was to astonish and amaze the observer.

The perfect symbol of this historical layering is **Palazzo Madama**. Seen from the rear, its medieval towers rise from ancient Roman walls; from the front, the eye is dazzled by the transparent façade designed by architect Filippo Juvarra, commissioned by the Madame Reali (literally, "Royal Ladies", that is, Queens) to transform a fortress

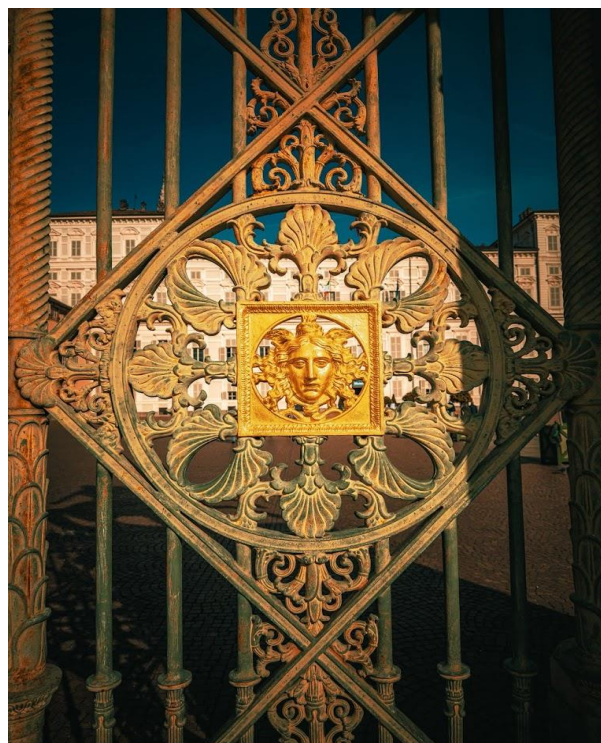
into a palace of light. Nearby, the **Royal Palace** became the very heart of the House of Savoy's power.

While the city centre was being consolidated as the seat of authority, the Savoy rulers also conceived what became known as the "**Crown of Delights**": a magnificent system of residences devoted to leisure, hunting and courtly pleasure, arranged like a radiant crown around the capital, Turin. Among these are the Valentino Castle, the Royal Palace of Venaria Reale and the Hunting Lodge of Stupinigi.

The nineteenth century marked another crucial chapter in the city's history. Turin played a leading role in the Risorgimento, the political, social, cultural and military movement that led to the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861. Turin, the Savoy capital, thus became the **first capital of the newly unified country**.

When the capital was later moved to Florence and then to Rome, the city did not resign itself to decline; instead, it invested new ideas and resources to transform itself from a political centre into the capital of industry and the automobile. Between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, FIAT (Fabbrica Italiana Automobili Torino – Italian Automobile Factory in Turin) was founded, attracting tens of thousands of workers and investors. The urban area expanded, and its architectural landscape was enriched with refined Liberty-style details that still adorn many buildings today.

Yet the most remarkable modern "miracle" took place at the turn of the new millennium. The 2006 Winter Olympics attracted investment and highlighted the city's true assets. Thanks to its **deep-rooted historic sites, world-class museums** such as the Egyptian Museum and the National Cinema Museum, and a **culinary tradition of outstanding excellence**, Turin has established itself as a world-renowned cultural and tourist destination.



Welcome to our determined and elegant city, with its discreet charm that never fails to amaze.

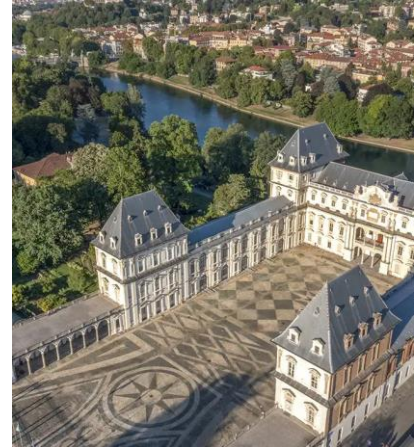
CASTELLO DEL VALENTINO

Standing on the banks of the River Po, where a riverside villa once rose outside the walls of Turin, the Valentino Castle now dominates the landscape. Its history is an intricate blend of dynastic ambition, French taste and radical transformations, which have made it one of the most elegant symbols of Savoy architecture.

Origins and the mark of the Madama Reale

Although the earliest records date back to the 16th century, the destiny of the castle changed in 1619, when Duke Victor Amadeus I of Savoy gifted it to his wife, Christine of France. It was she — the celebrated Madama Reale — who transformed the residence into a Maison de Plaisance, inspired by the models of her homeland.

Under the guidance of architects Carlo and Amedeo di Castellamonte, the building acquired its distinctive U-shaped plan, with four tall corner towers and steeply sloping roofs clad in slate tiles, typical of transalpine architecture. The rooms on the piano nobile, such as the Zodiac Room, the Room of the Lilies and the Hall of Honour, were decorated with frescoes and stucco work of great artistic value, created by masters from the Lugano area and characterised by floral, symbolic and celebratory themes dedicated to the Savoy dynasty. The castle thus became the heart of court life, the setting for lavish celebrations and political intrigues that animated its frescoed halls.



Decline and rebirth

After Christine's death in 1663, the Valentino entered a long period of decline. During the Napoleonic occupation, the building fell into disrepair and was even used as a barracks and warehouse. Its true rebirth came in the 19th century: in 1858, on the occasion of the Great National Exhibition, the castle was restored and reconnected to the city through the creation of the splendid Valentino Park.

A Centre of science and culture

Today, the castle has set aside its royal role to embrace that of culture and knowledge. Since 1859 it has been home to the Politecnico di Torino, originally known as the Royal School for the Application of Engineers, and it is now seat of the Faculty of Architecture. Walking beneath its arcades, one no longer senses only the atmosphere of Savoy parades, but also the vibrant energy of thousands of students. Since 1997, the Valentino Castle has been included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, as an enduring guardian of Turin's elegance.

The Rooms

Zodiac Room

The ceiling is dominated by a large mythological fresco depicting the **River Po personified with the features of Neptune**, symbolising the strength and prosperity of the Turin area.

Room of the Lilies

This room formed part of the apartment of Duchess Christine of France. Its name derives from the dense decoration of golden lilies on a blue background – the emblem of the French monarchy – commissioned by Christine to reaffirm her bond with her homeland.

Hall of Honour

The frescoes portray moments of glory and mythological scenes alluding to the stability and prosperity of ducal rule. The castle was renowned for hosting spectacular events such as “river battles” on the Po and jousting tournaments, described by contemporary chroniclers as displays of **extraordinary magnificence**.

LINGOTTO

The name “Lingotto” is commonly associated with a metal ingot (or lingot) produced after smelting. In this case, however, beyond being the toponym of land once owned by a noble family, the Lingotto is the symbolic monument of **industrial Turin**: a concrete giant that shaped the 20th century and has since been transformed into a centre for culture, shopping and design.



The Lingotto is not merely a building; it is a landmark in the history of modern architecture.

In 1923, architect Giacomo Matté-Trucco designed what became known as the **Vertical Factory**. Production followed a revolutionary concept: raw materials entered at ground level, and the car gradually moved upwards through the floors as it was assembled. Once completed, the vehicle emerged on the top floor — directly onto the test track on the roof. At the time, it was one of the most advanced industrial plants in the world.

When FIAT production was transferred to Mirafiori in 1982, architect **Renzo Piano** was entrusted with the redevelopment of the complex. He transformed the former factory into a multifunctional centre housing a hotel, an auditorium and congress centre, shopping areas and offices, giving new life to one of the most iconic symbols of Turin’s industrial past.

Curiosities

The Rooftop Track (La Pista 500)

This is Lingotto’s most iconic feature. It is a test circuit approximately one kilometre long, located on the roof of the building and characterised by two spectacular parabolic curves. Today, it has become the **highest rooftop garden in Europe**, hosting more than 40,000 plants. It is open to visitors and offers breathtaking views over the Alps and the city.

The “Casket” and the “Bubble”

Renzo Piano added two futuristic structures on the roof:

- **The Bubble:** a spherical meeting room made of glass and steel, seemingly suspended in mid-air and equipped with a helipad.
- **The Casket:** a suspended metal structure housing the Agnelli Art Gallery, which preserves masterpieces by Canaletto, Matisse and Picasso.

The Helical Ramps

To allow cars to reach the rooftop track, two enormous helical ramps were built at the ends of the building. They are masterpieces of engineering that fascinated even Le Corbusier, who famously described the Lingotto as "*one of the most impressive sights that industry has ever offered*".



MAUTO – NATIONAL AUTOMOBILE MUSEUM

Just a few minutes' walk from the Lingotto stands the National Automobile Museum, founded in 1933 and considered one of the oldest and most prestigious car museums in the world. It houses more than 200 original vehicles from 80 different manufacturers, tracing the evolution of the automobile from its origins – including steam-powered carriages – to contemporary design, with a strong technical, scientific and historical focus.

It is well worth a visit.



ROYAL PALACE



The Royal Palace of Turin, located in the very heart of the city, is one of the most important Savoy residences and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Built from the 17th century onwards, it served for centuries as the official seat of the House of Savoy, which governed from here first the Duchy, then the Kingdom of Sardinia and finally a united Italy.

The sober and elegant exterior opens onto richly decorated interiors that tell the story of power, taste and daily life at court.

The visit includes extraordinary spaces such as the **Grand Staircase**, the **Throne Room**, the **Ballroom**, the **Scissors Staircase**, and the **Chapel of the Holy Shroud**. Each room is a journey through Baroque and Neoclassical art, among stuccoes, tapestries, original furnishings and paintings by great masters.

Particularly fascinating are the **Royal Apartments**, which reveal the more intimate side of court life: bedrooms, drawing rooms, studies and boudoirs of kings and queens. Here, beyond official splendour, one can sense the private dimension of the royal family, shaped by daily rituals, family relationships and moments of rest.

The **Private Apartments** offer a more refined and intimate atmosphere, with delicate decorations and original furnishings that reflect fashions and tastes between the 18th and 19th centuries. Historical figures such as Victor Emmanuel II, the first King of Italy, and Queen Maria Adelaide lived in these rooms, protagonists of Italian history.

Visiting the Royal Palace means immersing oneself in centuries of history, art and politics, and understanding the central role Turin played in the formation of the Italian state. It is an essential stop for anyone wishing to discover the city's royal soul and admire one of the most important museum complexes in Europe.

Curiosity **the Scissors Staircase**

The Scissors Staircase is one of the most celebrated masterpieces by architect Filippo Juvarra within the Royal Palace. It is considered a marvel of Baroque engineering for a very specific reason: Juvarra was required to build it within an extremely confined space, in order to connect the first floor with the bridal apartments on the second floor, creating a structure that appears to "float" without heavy supports.

Its name derives from a decorative detail placed on the vault of the central ramp: a stucco medallion depicting **a pair of scissors cutting a forked tongue**. Behind this symbol lies a rather spicy anecdote. Court gossip claimed that Juvarra would never succeed in constructing a staircase in such a limited space without causing the building to collapse. When the architect completed the work flawlessly, he chose to “cut the tongues” of his detractors with this small but elegant artistic revenge.



CHAPEL OF THE HOLY SHROUD

The Chapel of the Holy Shroud is one of the most enigmatic and spectacular masterpieces of Baroque architecture in the world. Designed at the end of the 17th century by Guarino Guarini – a Theatine monk, mathematician and architect – the chapel was conceived with a precise purpose: to house the most precious relic of the House of Savoy, the Holy Shroud, the linen cloth which, according to tradition, wrapped the body of Jesus Christ after the Crucifixion.

An Architecture that defies gravity

The chapel's most extraordinary feature is its **dome**. Guarini devised a system of superimposed and staggered arches that gradually narrow as they rise, creating the optical illusion that the structure is far taller than it actually is. Looking upwards, light filters through small windows, producing an almost celestial effect that makes the dome appear to float in mid-air.

The entire building unfolds as a spiritual journey, expressed through architecture and materials:

- **The Black Marble:** The lower section is clad in black marble from Frabosa, symbolising the tomb, death and sin.
- **The Ascent:** As the eye rises towards the dome, colours become lighter and the geometry more complex, representing the passage from earth to heaven, from death to Resurrection.
- **The Sun Star:** At the centre of the vault shines a star enclosing the dove of the Holy Spirit – the point of maximum light and hope.

The Chapel of the Holy Shroud is not merely an architectural marvel, but a powerful synthesis of faith, science and symbolism, where geometry and spirituality merge to create one of the most intense and moving spaces of European Baroque art.



PALAZZO MADAMA

Palazzo Madama, located in the geographical heart of Turin in Piazza Castello, is a unique building in the world, encapsulating two thousand years of history within a single architectural structure. Visiting Palazzo Madama means discovering the layered soul of Turin, where Roman archaeology, medieval architecture, Baroque art and modern culture coexist in perfect harmony.

The palace owes its name to the Madame Reali — Christine of France and Marie Jeanne Baptiste of Savoy-Nemours — who chose it as their preferred residence during the 17th and 18th centuries.

What makes Palazzo Madama truly extraordinary is its **dual identity**. The western-facing 18th-century façade, an absolute masterpiece of Baroque architecture by **Filippo Juvarra**, is built of pale stone, large windows and statues. Yet, by simply walking around the building, one discovers its medieval side: red-brick towers rising from the ancient foundations of the Roman gate of Augusta Taurinorum, and a medieval botanical garden set within the former moat.



Palazzo Madama is also a powerful symbol of Italian political history. It served as the seat of the Senate first under the Savoy monarchy and later under the Kingdom of Italy from 1861, playing a central role in the birth of the unified Italian state.

Today the palace houses the **Civic Museum of Ancient Art**, but it is the rooms themselves that leave visitors breathless:

- **The Monumental Staircase:** Designed by Juvarra to be flooded with light, this staircase transforms the ascent to the piano nobile into a theatrical experience, welcoming visitors into one of the most scenographic staircases in the world.
- **The Piano Nobile:** A set of rooms decorated for the two Madame Reali, where mirrors, gilded surfaces and frescoes recount court life of the 17th and 18th centuries.
- **The Chinese Cabinet:** A room entirely lined with gilded lacquer panels, a true jewel of 18th-century exotic taste.

A climb to the **Medieval Tower** is not to be missed, offering a 360-degree view over the rooftops of Turin and the surrounding Alps.

PALAZZO CARIGNANO

Palazzo Carignano is considered one of the most original and daring examples of **European Baroque architecture**. Designed in 1679 by **Guarino Guarini** for Prince Emanuele Filiberto of Savoy-Carignano, the palace is not only an architectural masterpiece, but also a powerful symbol of Italian identity. It was here that Charles Albert, King of Sardinia, (1798) and his son Victor Emmanuel II, first King of Italy, (1820) were born, and here that the Parliament of Italy first met in 1861.

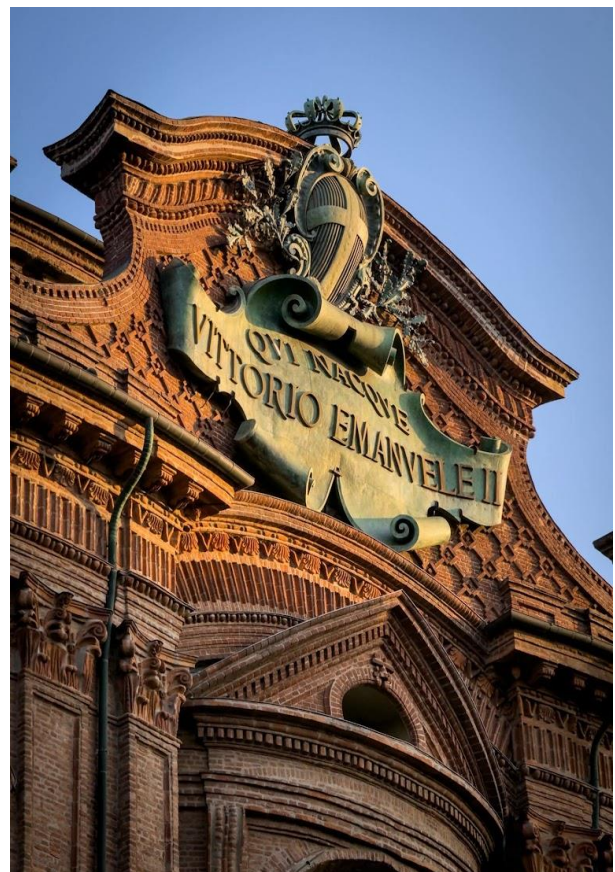
The Façade: a Wave of brick

The true protagonist is the extraordinary curved façade overlooking Piazza Carignano. Unlike the rigid noble palaces of the time, Guarini chose a sinuous design, alternating concave and convex lines that give the impression of a living, moving building.

Deliberately, the façade is not clad in stone or marble but built entirely of **exposed brick** — a hallmark of Piedmontese Baroque tradition. Guarini elevated this “humble” material to astonishing artistic heights, shaping it into mouldings and geometric decorations that give the building a warm, sober and solemn appearance.

The central convex section of the façade conceals a splendid elliptical atrium and two monumental staircases that follow the external curve — a true miracle of Baroque engineering.

As with Palazzo Madama, walking around the building reveals a “second face”: the 19th-century façade overlooking Piazza Carlo Alberto, built in white stone in an eclectic style.



Inside, visitors can explore the **Apartments of the Princes**, richly decorated with gilded boiseries and mirrors, or visit the **National Museum of the Risorgimento**, where the original chamber of the Subalpine Parliament has been preserved intact, complete with its red velvet benches.

Curiosity

Looking closely above the windows of the piano nobile, one can spot unusual decorative friezes resembling **feathered headdresses**. These figures represent Native Americans and commemorate the victory of the **Carignano regiment against the Iroquois** in Canada in 1667, fought alongside the French.



THE LANGHE – A SEA OF HILLS

Just over an hour's drive from Turin lie the **Langhe**, a historic region of southern Piedmont. They are not merely a tourist destination, but a true cultural landscape, where human activity and nature have shaped a perfect balance, so much so that the area was declared a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** in 2014.

The term Langa is thought to derive from an ancient Celtic word meaning "tongues of land". Indeed, the landscape is characterised by a series of long, narrow hills arranged parallel to one another.

- **Lower Langa:** This is the best-known area, near Alba, where the climate is milder and prestigious vineyards dominate, producing Nebbiolo, Barolo and Barbaresco wines.
- **Upper Langa:** Towards the Apennines, the scenery changes: vineyards give way to forests, the air becomes cooler, and hazelnut groves and pastures take centre stage.

Castles and medieval villages

Almost every hill in the Langhe is crowned by a castle or a medieval tower. Villages such as **Barolo**, **Grinzane Cavour**, **Serralunga d'Alba** and **La Morra** offer postcard-perfect views, with the Alps forming a majestic backdrop on the horizon.

BAROLO AND ITS CASTLE



Barolo is not just a village, but a true secular "temple" dedicated to wine, dominated by the castle that has shaped its destiny.

The first stones of the castle were laid in the **10th century** to defend the area from raids by Hungarians and Saracens. The decisive turning point came in **1250**, when the powerful **Falletti family** took possession of it. Over the centuries, the austere medieval fortress was transformed into an elegant noble country residence.

The true revolution occurred in the 19th century thanks to **Marchioness Giulia Colbert Falletti** and the French oenologist Louis Oudart, who, at the Marchioness's

request, refined the winemaking techniques of the local Nebbiolo grape, giving birth to **Barolo wine**.

Since 2010, the castle has housed **WiMu – the Wine Museum**, an engaging interactive and sensory museum designed by François Confino. The visit begins on the top floor and gradually descends towards the cellars, symbolically retracing the journey of wine from sunlight to the darkness of the barrels.

Curiosity:

“The Wine of Kings”

It is said that Marchioness Giulia sent **325 “carrà”** (transport barrels) of Barolo to King Charles Albert – one for each day of the year (excluding fasting periods) – because the sovereign was eager to taste the wine everyone was talking about. It soon became the wine served at court, earning the nickname “the King of Wines and the Wine of Kings.”

The View from the castle

From the castle windows, a 360-degree panorama reveals hills seemingly “combed” with rows of Nebbiolo vines. Nebbiolo is a demanding and aristocratic grape variety, fond of the autumn mists (*nebbie* in Italian) from which it takes its name. From Nebbiolo grapes come not only Nebbiolo wine itself, but also two magnificent red wines: Barolo and Barbaresco.

Barolo wine is produced from Nebbiolo grapes grown in only 11 municipalities, including Barolo itself. It is aged for more than 38 months, at least 18 of which in oak barrels, and is known as the “King of Wines” for its full-bodied character and intense aromas.

Barbaresco wine, on the other hand, is produced from Nebbiolo grapes grown around the village of Barbaresco, on soils with a different chemical composition, closer to the River Tanaro, where temperatures are slightly warmer. It is aged for more than 26 months, at least nine in oak barrels, and is known as the “Queen of Wines” for its silkier texture and more pronounced floral notes.

FONTANAFREDDA



Fontanafredda is neither a village of the Langhe with its own castle nor a simple hill.

It is a Barolo vineyard, surrounded by everything needed by those who cultivate these vines to live in harmony with the community and with nature. Like many beautiful things, Fontanafredda was born from a great love story – that between Victor Emmanuel II, the first King of Italy, and Rosa Vercellana, a young woman of humble origins, whom the king used to call *La bela Rosin* (*Pretty Rose* in Piedmontese).

To truly understand Fontanafredda... we will go there.

GRINZANE CAVOUR



Another hill, another village crowned by a castle: Grinzane Cavour, whose appearance recalls a severe medieval fortress dating back to the 13th century.

Count Camillo Benso di Cavour, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Sardinia, a skilled diplomat and one of the central figures of the Italian Risorgimento, lived here for 17 years. Together with

Marchioness Giulia Falletti of Barolo, he shared the ambitious project of refining Nebbiolo grapes to create Barolo wine.

Every year in November, the castle's halls host the **World Auction of the White Truffle of Alba**, considered the most prized truffle by gourmets worldwide. This exclusive event, broadcast live via satellite, sees exceptional truffles sold for sums exceeding € 100,000, with all proceeds donated to charity.



THE MOLE ANTONELLIANA

The **Mole Antonelliana** is far more than a monument: it is the undisputed symbol of Turin, an architectural feat bordering on the impossible for its time, and the guardian of extraordinary stories.

It all began in **1863**, when Turin's Jewish community decided to build a synagogue to celebrate the freedom of worship obtained only a few years earlier. They entrusted the project to the visionary architect **Alessandro Antonelli**.

The original plan called for a building "only" 47 metres tall. However, Antonelli continually modified the project as construction progressed, adding floors and raising the dome. By 1869, costs had tripled and the height had already doubled. Exhausted by delays and expenses, the Jewish community eventually transferred the building to the Municipality of Turin.

When it was completed in 1889 – the same year the Eiffel Tower was inaugurated in Paris – the Mole, at **167.5 metres**, was the **tallest masonry building in the world**. Since 2000, it has housed the **National Cinema Museum**, one of the most visited museums in Italy. The exhibition unfolds in a spiral ascending towards the top, following the shape of the dome itself.

Curiosities

The Fallen Angel

Originally, a winged genius (often mistaken for an angel) stood at the tip of the spire. It was struck by lightning and fell in 1904. Today, the famous **twelve-pointed star** crowns the Mole, while the original statue is preserved inside the museum.

The 1953 Storm

On 23 May 1953, a violent storm snapped the spire, which crashed into the garden below. Fortunately, there were no casualties. The spire was rebuilt with a steel core to better withstand the wind.

The Elevator in the Void

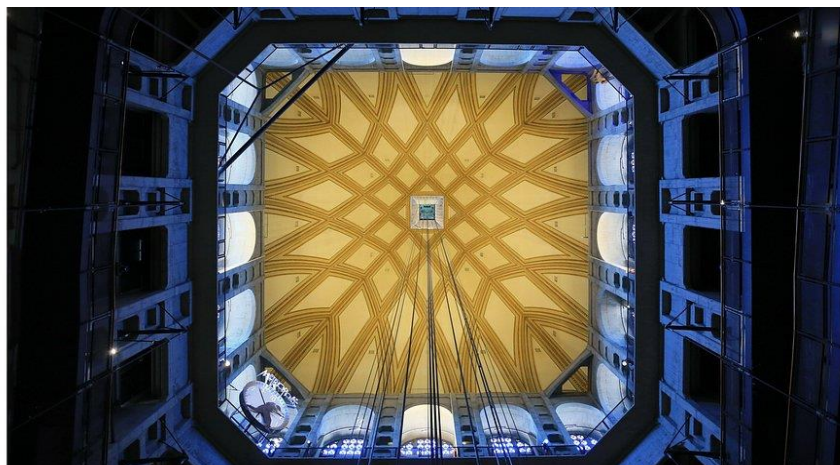
The panoramic lift is a thrilling experience: a glass cabin suspended in mid-air at the centre of the dome, ascending 85 metres to the Tempietto (literally: little temple). Online booking: <https://cinema.museitorino.it/eventi/ingresso-ascensore-panoramico>.

By Night

The dome is often illuminated with artistic installations. The most famous is "Il volo dei numeri" (literally: flight of numbers) by Mario Merz, displaying the **Fibonacci sequence** in red neon along the side elevation.

Perfect Photo Spot

Head to Piazza Vittorio Veneto for the best shot, or climb Monte dei Cappuccini at sunset, when the Mole stands out against the Alps.



BASILICA OF SUPERGA

If the Mole is the soul of Turin, the Basilica of Superga is its crown.

Set on a hilltop at 672 metres above sea level, it offers one of the most spectacular panoramas in Europe. In 1728, Jean-Jacques Rousseau described it as “the most beautiful sight the human eye can behold.”

The basilica was born from a **religious vow** made in **1706**. Turin was under siege by French troops, and Duke Victor Amadeus II climbed the hill of Superga to observe the battlefield. Before a small statue of the Virgin Mary, he vowed to build a great church on that spot should victory be granted.

The Savoy forces prevailed (with the decisive support of the Austrian), and the Duke kept his promise. In 1717, he entrusted the project to the brilliant architect **Filippo Juvarra**, who had the summit of the hill levelled – lowering it by 40 metres – to create the base for the basilica.



Curiosities

The Royal Tombs

Beneath the church lies the Mausoleum of the House of Savoy, a solemn and evocative place where kings and princes rest in monumental sarcophagi. It is considered one of the most important dynastic pantheons in Europe.

The Hall of the Popes

Within the monastic complex is a unique collection: the only complete series in the world of painted portraits of all the Popes, from Saint Peter to the present day.

The Dome

Visitors can climb to the top of the dome via a narrow spiral staircase of **131 steps**. On clear days, the view stretches from the Maritime Alps to the Pennine Alps, with Rosa and the Matterhorn clearly visible on the horizon.

The Rack Railway

The **Sassi–Superga rack railway** was inaugurated in **1884**. It reaches the summit from the base of the hill near the River Po. This historic train, with original wooden carriages dating back to 1934, climbs steadily up the hillside, offering a true journey back in time.

The Tragedy of the Grande Torino

Behind the basilica stands the wall against which, on **4 May 1949**, the plane carrying the legendary football team **Grande Torino** crashed. The entire team perished in the accident. To this day, the site remains a place of pilgrimage for thousands of supporters from all over the world.

STUPINIGI

The **Hunting Lodge of Stupinigi** is a splendid Savoy residence located to the south-west of Turin. It was commissioned by **Victor Amadeus II of Savoy** and designed by the brilliant architect **Filippo Juvarra**. The lodge was never intended as a permanent residence, rather as a support base for hunting expeditions, a venue for celebrations following the hunt, a place of leisure for the court and a representative setting for distinguished guests.

A masterpiece of Baroque architecture, the heart of the complex is the oval central hall, from which four wings radiate to form a Saint Andrew's cross. This ingenious layout allowed the routes taken by the hunters to be observed directly from the windows of the main hall.

Among the illustrious guests who stayed at Stupinigi were **Emperor Joseph II of Habsburg** (1769), the future **Tsar Paul I of Russia** (1782), **King Ferdinand I of Bourbon** (1785), **Napoleon Bonaparte** in 1805 and his sister **Pauline**, wife of the imperial governor of Piedmont. In the late 19th century, the lodge also served as the summer residence of **Queen Margherita of Savoy**.

Curiosities

Optical effects and illusions

Juvarra was a master of theatrical scenography. Inside the central hall, the wall and ceiling paintings employ *trompe-l'œil* techniques designed to deceive the eye, making the space appear much larger than it actually is and giving the illusion of real balconies where the surfaces are in fact flat.

The stag on the roof

A statue of a large stag crowns the dome, the emblem of the Hunting Lodge. The current statue is a copy of the original created in 1766, which is now preserved indoor to protect it from the elements.

An elephant in the garden

In 1827, King Charles Felix received an Indian elephant named Fritz as a gift from the Viceroy of Egypt. The animal lived here for over 20 years. Fritz's remains are preserved at the Regional Museum of Natural Sciences of Turin.



THE ROYAL PALACE OF VENARIA REALE

If Stupinigi was the Savoy residence for weekend festivities, the Royal Palace of Venaria Reale was their answer to Versailles.

It is a monumental complex so vast that calling it simply a “palace” is an understatement: it is an entire settlement devoted to pleasure, hunting and, above all, to the glory of the House of Savoy.

Origins and Development

The history of Venaria Reale is marked by extraordinary heights and dramatic declines. The palace was commissioned by Duke Charles Emmanuel II, who wished to create a hunting and ceremonial residence in an area surrounded by forests rich in game.

The task was entrusted to architect **Amedeo di Castellamonte**, who conceived the palace as the centre of a grand design, surrounded by extensive gardens and an **entirely new town** built to serve the needs of the court.

In later years, **Filippo Juvarra** and **Benedetto Alfieri** enriched the complex with sumptuous Baroque additions, including the **Gallery of Diana**, the **Chapel of Saint Hubert**, the **Citroniera** (orangery) and the **Great Stables**.

Decline and Restoration

With the arrival of **Napoleon**, the Royal Palace was stripped of its original function and converted into a military barracks. The gardens were transformed into training grounds, while the magnificent halls were used as stables and ammunition depots. Military use of the complex continued under the Italian army until the **Second World War**, leaving the palace in a state of severe neglect.

Only towards the end of the 20th century did an immense restoration project begin, aimed at returning the palace to its former splendour. After more than **eight years of work** – one of the largest cultural restoration projects ever undertaken in Europe – the Royal Palace of Venaria Reale reopened to the public in **2007**.

Curiosities

The Gallery of Diana

Designed by Juvarra, the Gallery of Diana is **80 metres long, 12 metres wide and 15 metres high**, making it one of the most famous corridors in the world. The chequered floor and the vast windows create an optical illusion of infinite depth. The stuccoes, however, are not merely decorative: they depict stories and symbols connected with hunting deities.

The Rediscovered gardens

For decades, the gardens of Venaria Reale had virtually disappeared, reduced to mud and military ruins. The gardens



visible today have been reconstructed following original 17th-century designs. They represent one of the rare cases in which a so-called "historical reconstruction" is considered a masterpiece of contemporary landscape design.

The Citroniera

The Citroniera is a monumental gallery measuring 148 by 14 metres, south-facing and located beside the Great Stables. It was designed to provide a mild winter climate for citrus trees, which were sheltered here to protect them from harsh weather conditions.



The Savoy's Bucintoro

Preserved inside the Juvarra Stables is the Bucintoro, a magnificent 18th-century Venetian ceremonial barge and the only surviving example of its kind. Commissioned by **Victor Amadeus II**, it reached Turin by river from Venice. Entirely covered in gold and sculptural decoration, it can rightly be described as a true **18th-century royal yacht**.

