

Art



# *Baroque in Piedmont*

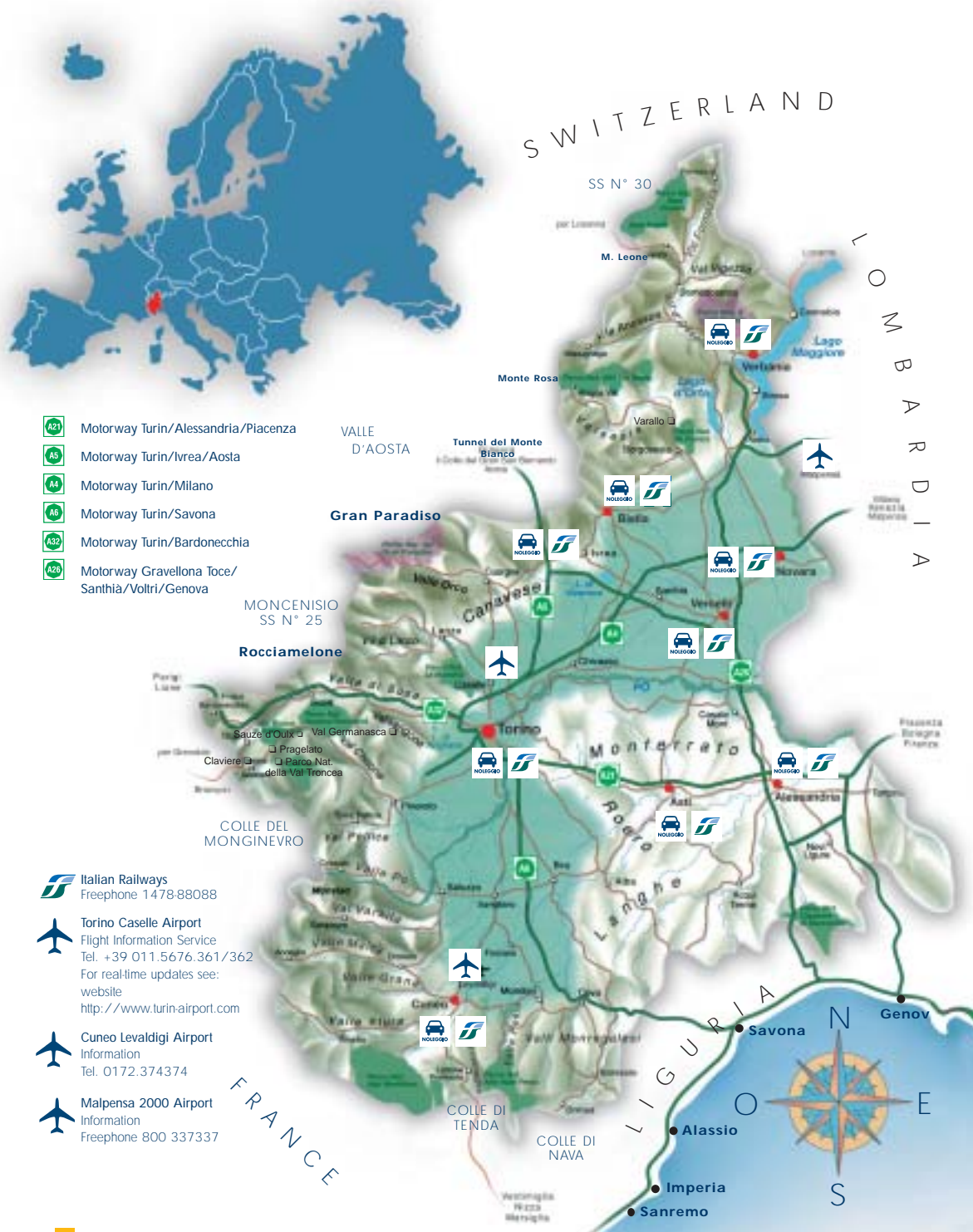
**Itineraries in Art**



**Piedmont**  
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PIEMONTE**



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# Introduction

Any thematic itinerary focussed exclusively on the monuments of an epoch, on the artistic legacy of a period, style, or movement, is likely to engender paradoxical situations. Like inducing us to deliberately ignore whatever is not included in our guide, to close our eyes and wander like sleepwalkers from one monument to the next, identifying and appreciating only single and isolated fragments of time, history, and art.

If there is a region where none of this happens, that region is Piedmont. If there is an artistic and historical period to which this dispersion does not apply, that period is the Baroque age. And not simply because entire quarters, and even towns, are intact in their harmony and charm and are therefore ideal settings for journeys through time, art, and custom.

Baroque is Piedmontese because Piedmont is the quintessence of Baroque.

The Baroque era is the *Grand Siècle* of a small gem-like state that echoed Paris and aspired to rule over Italy. The golden age of urban royal palaces, hillside villas and suburban “Delights”; of

castles immersed in fairy-tale parks; of shrines, basilicas and churches embodying the grandiose faith of the powerful and the simple devotion of the poor.

Piedmontese Baroque is the *esprit de geometrie* of arcades, squares, and straight urban streets that enchanted a sentimental rationalist like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, that plunged Friedrich Nietzsche into folly, that inspired the metaphysical restlessness of Giorgio De Chirico's *Piazze d'Italia*.

Just outside Turin, we find a mosaic of palaces, villas, synagogues, castles. And the precious crown of Holy Mounts, proclaimed UNESCO World Heritage Sites in 2003.

Piedmont is not just Baroque. But knowing Baroque means understanding Piedmont, because Baroque is the spirit of Piedmont.

**Enzo Ghigo**  
Governor of Piedmont



# Baroque in Piedmont



In Piedmont, Turin in particular, the Baroque period – from the end of the sixteenth century to the end of the eighteenth century – coincided with the development of the Savoy state, tracing the rise of a dynasty, representing and celebrating the power of a duchy, and later a kingdom, which was to play a fundamental role in the history of Italy. The key artists of the period all came to work in Turin, and Turin is home to some of the finest examples of Baroque works– just think of the San Lorenzo church or the Palazzina di Caccia di Stupinigi. For many the term “Baroque” evokes images of lavish decorations, scrolls, stuccoes, gilding and marble. But Baroque is about more than just pomp and ornament. It is not merely a style or aesthetic current: Baroque is the artistic expression of an era, the period between the late sixteenth and mid-

*Palazzo Madama*



eighteenth centuries, which was characterised by radical changes. The end of the Renaissance, the colonisation of the Americas, wars and dynastic battles, and the scientific discoveries of the day all began to shed doubt on existing dogmas and previous certainties, while this period was also dominated by the spirit of the Counter Reformation, the great absolutist monarchies and a society based on rigid hierarchies.

Baroque, with its rarely straight lines, its stuccoes, decorative elements and special effects, reflects the artists' ongoing attempt to reconcile opposites - science and faith, reason and emotion, technique and effect: the very contrasts which were dividing and at the same time shaping the world in that period. Baroque originated in Rome and soon spread throughout Italy and Europe; leading figures include Bernini, Borromini, Juvarra, Guarini, Pietro da Cortona and Longhena.

Emanuele Filiberto brought Baroque to Piedmont: in exchange for fundamental support to the emperor Philip II, he was given back his father's lost lands, and in 1578 he transferred the capital of the Duchy from Chambéry to Turin. For at least another one hundred and fifty years the Savoy kingdom was the only state in Italy to have an established, acknowledged political and economic structure.

The close links between this art form and the representation of the glories of state mean that the finest examples of Piedmontese Baroque are to be found in Turin and areas connected to the capital, like the royal residences. However there are traces of Baroque art in all the provinces of Piedmont, mainly, but not exclusively in the ecclesiastical context.

In this publication we are pleased to present the most important sites of the Baroque era.

*Palazzo Carignano*





Turin surprises the tourist for two main reasons.

Firstly with its sheer charm, which is an even greater surprise for those expecting an area dedicated to industry and work, efficient but a little forbidding. The second surprise is finding that the architecture, and Baroque architecture in particular, of the historic city centre boasts the involvement of the most illustrious names in seventeenth and eighteenth century art, who created imposing works of great beauty here.

This rich heritage is thanks to the complete transformation of the capital brought about by the Savoy family from the end of the sixteenth century, which

continued for almost two centuries, with various additions. And while this transformation all but cancelled the traces of Medieval Turin, it made the city into one of the international capitals of Baroque.

In terms of the radical transformation of the layout of the capital, sumptuous royal residences were erected, from Palazzo Reale to the Palazzina di Caccia di Stupinigi, and existing buildings like Palazzo Madama and the Valentino Castle were reworked.

A new town plan was created, with wide, straight paved streets suited to heavy carriage traffic, and sometimes accompanied by arcades for pedestrians, as in Via Po. These streets were

balanced with the addition of squares, buildings and monuments, according to a precise, strict layout.

Following the French model, attention was dedicated to making the most of the city's main river, the Po, which became a scenic and architectural element reflecting grandiose constructions like the Valentino Castle.

Nobles and court dignitaries had elegant city residences built, where the luxury not shown off on the outside was transferred to the interior. This is the origin of the splendid, deservedly famous courtyards of Turin, and their grandiose marble friezed staircases: these were the areas, service areas in appearance only, that gave visitors their first, vital impression of their hosts' standing and wealth.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the greatest architects and town-planners of the age came to work in Turin, from Guarino Guarini to Filippo Juvarra, who, while embodying two profoundly different concepts of Baroque were united by the beauty of their creations.

Guarini, a Theatine monk from Mode-

na, celebrated the solemnity of the Savoy State, and the monarchy as the institution and symbol of authority. His majestic but never over-wrought buildings with their elegant undulating façades and interwoven arches; the use of a "poor" material such as brick, enhanced by ever-changing effects of space and volume created by the light; and the hues of the marble used, all serve to convey the vitality and strength of a new, emerging state.

Meanwhile Juvarra, who was born in Messina and trained in Rome, was on the scene a few decades after Guarini, in a period which saw the state as an acknowledged, established power, celebrating itself and its glories.

It has been said that while Guarini represents the state, Juvarra represents the court.

Juvarra's work is highly scenic, buildings constructed at "strategic" points like the hill of Superga or the plains of Stupinigi. Windows were not just for those inside to look out, but also so that the lit halls, elegant celebrations, and rich clothing and furnishings, could be admired from the outside.

*The Valentino Castle*



## Itinerary 1

### Piazza Castello, Via Po and the surrounding area



*Piazza Castello:  
Piazzetta Reale, Palazzo Madama, the Dioscuri*

The point of departure and arrival for any tour, **Piazza Castello** lies at the heart of Turin. The square was designed by Ascanio Vitozzi at the end of the 16th century to lend form to a space which until then had been somewhat uneven, and to revitalise the structure at its centre, the eponymous “Castle”, now known as **Palazzo Madama**. This construction is the result of an extraordinary fusion of buildings situated above and around the *Porta Pretoria*, one of the fortified entrances into Turin

#### A magic town

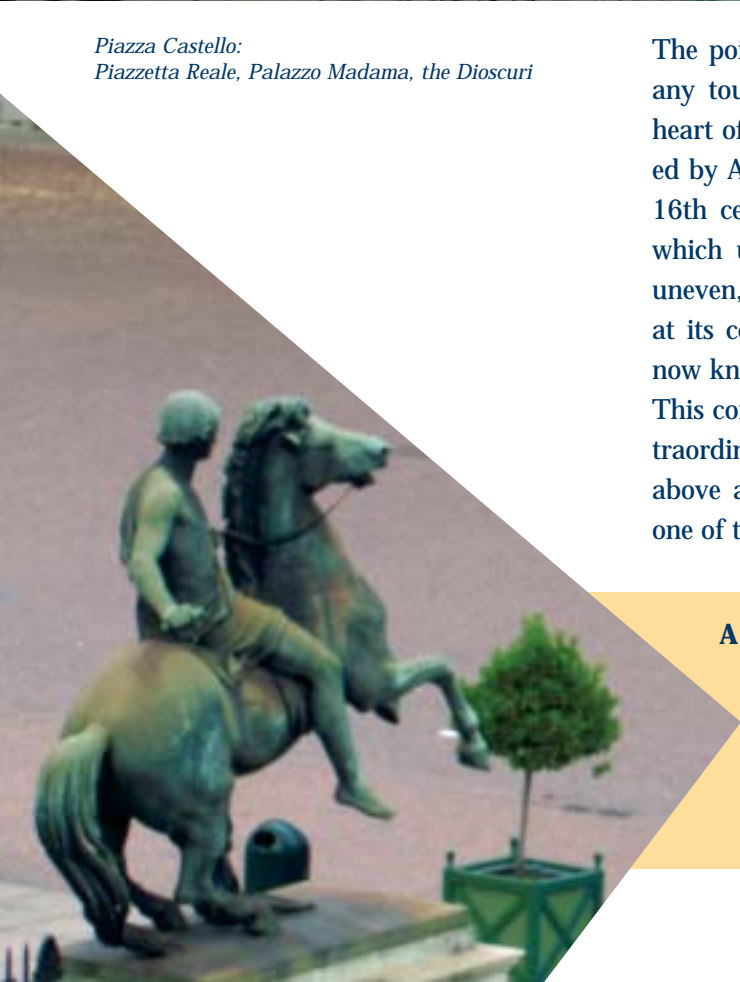
It is a well-known fact that, according to exoteric doctrines, Turin is one of the main “magic” cities of the

in the Roman period, the remains of which are the towers facing Via Garibaldi, now incorporated into the Baroque façade. In the 13th century the building became a stronghold, and in the 15th century the towers on the side facing Via Po were built. The building takes its name from the fact that during the 17th century it was the residence of the Royal ladies Maria Cristina of France and Maria Giovanna Battista of Savoy-Nemours, and was transformed into a royal

world. Legend has it that one of the statues at the top of the staircase of the Gran Madre church indicates the spot where no less than the Holy Grail is buried, deep into the river bed.

townhouse: Ascanio Vitozzi and Carlo di Castellamonte worked on it, adapting the façade and covering the internal courtyard, which was transformed into a hall. But the most spectacular transformation came about during the 18th century. The Royal Architect Filippo Juvarra designed the façade in white stone from Chianocco and the grandiose internal staircase in such a way that every element, from the windows to the columns, from the balustrade to the statues, strongly conveyed

Piazza Castello seems to play a crucial role in this “magic” context, because the Castor and Pollux statues are said to mark the area in which the forces of good are most powerful.



## Itinerary 1

### Piazza Castello, Via Po and the surrounding area

the opulence and power of a kingdom in full expansion.

Overlooking the square are some of the most important Baroque buildings in Turin, starting from **Palazzo Reale**, constructed on the site of the ancient bishop's palace, which all the court architects worked on over a period of around two centuries.

The initial design was created by Ascanio Vitozzi at the end of the 16th century, and in the mid-17th century the façade designed by Carlo Morello was



completed. Work continued in the next century: Juvarra designed the spectacular *Scala delle Forbici*; Benedetto Alfieri the summer and winter apartments and the Beaumont Gallery, named after the painter Claudio Francesco Beaumont.

Palazzo Reale was a complex structure which was used not only as a residence for the sovereign, but represented the real nerve centre for state affairs. In the second half of the 17th century, with a view to this, Amedeo di Castellamonte created a large wing comprising a number of different structures which linked the palace to the *Contrada di Po* (the present day Via Po). Part of this was the *Ala delle Segreterie*, or Office Wing, which was also worked on by Juvarra and Benedetto Alfieri (this section now houses the offices of the Prefecture and the Provincial Council); the *State Archives*, also designed by Juvarra; the *Regio Theatre*, designed by Benedetto Alfieri and completed in 1740, then destroyed by a fire in 1936 and rebuilt in the 1970's; the *Military Academy*, which was damaged during the Second World War and then demolished to allow for the rebuilding of the adjacent theatre; and lastly the old stables, the *Royal Riding School*, also the work of Alfieri, and now restored to host exhibitions and cultural events.

The part of Palazzo Reale which is open to visitors includes the Royal Armoury

and the Beaumont Gallery, and the central section of the palace behind **Piazzetta Reale**, enclosed by the gateway designed by Pelagio Palagi, which is topped by the statues of the **Dioscuri** (*Castor and Pollux*). Visitors can admire the Throne Room and a great variety of areas with furniture masterpieces created by Piffetti and the greatest cabinet-makers of the day, the precious soft furnishings and the *chinoiseries* fashionable in the 18th century, as well as magnificent collections of porcelain.

Behind the palace, the **Royal Gardens** are the result of the work of various landscape architects, starting from the famed André Le Nôtre, the architect of the Sun King, who designed the initial nucleus, which was later embellished with round terraces and fountains created by illustrious architects and sculptors. Also involved were the leading hydraulic engineers of the day, and the great gardener Henri Duparc, who was appointed to select and create the layout for the ornamental trees and plants.



Palazzo Reale



## Itinerary 1

### Piazza Castello, Via Po and the surrounding area

After crossing *Piazzetta Reale* and taking the passage-way that leads to Piazza San Giovanni, on the left we find **Palazzo Chiablese**, a construction which was initiated in the fifteenth century, but largely reworked in the eighteenth century by Benedetto Alfieri for Carlo Emanuele III.

Though seriously damaged in the Second World War, this building still features much of the original flooring and decor, while furnishings were brought in from various royal residences. The palace now hosts the Heritage and Environment Office.

Beside the palace is the **San Giovanni Battista Cathedral**, Turin's *Duomo*. The only example of Renaissance art in Turin, the *Duomo* was built in the last decade of the fifteenth century and consecrated in 1505. In 1722 Juvarra completed the bell tower, and the juxtaposition of the two styles is visible. Inside the cathedral there is a portal leading to the *Cappella della Sindone*, the **Chapel of the Shroud**, designed by Guarini, which housed the black marble altar with the silver chest with seven locks, containing the Holy

Shroud, which was brought to Turin from Chambéry in 1578. The chapel, which was greatly damaged during a fire in April 1997, was part of Palazzo Reale, and linked to the palace. It represents one of the finest masterpieces of the Baroque period.

Almost opposite the *Duomo* are the remains of the *Palatine Tower*, one of the entrances to Turin in the Roman period.

Adjacent to *Piazzetta Reale*, the little **San Lorenzo church** is one of Guarini's masterpieces, designed around 1665. He created a contained structure around a central ground plan, with an interplay of volume and space that gives rise to very special effects of light and colour on the coloured marble used for the lavish interior decorations. The entire construction is dominated by a dome in which ribs of the arches come together to form an eight-pointed star: the outline of the octagonal skylight.

The church features a vestibule (*Ora-torio dell'Addolorata*), with a Holy Stairway on the right side that pilgrims must climb on their knees.

*The San Lorenzo church*



## Itinerary 1

### Piazza Castello, Via Po and the surrounding area

The main streets of the city centre all start out from Piazza Castello: Via Accademia delle Scienze, Via Roma, Via Pietro Micca, Via Garibaldi, Via Palazzo di Città, Via Verdi and Via Po. Designed by Amedeo di Castellamonte, **Via Po** (the ancient *Contrada di Po*) links Piazza Castello and Piazza Vittorio Veneto and gives the impression of extending on the other side of the river up to the Gran Madre di Dio church.

In the eighteenth century this was the main street of the city, with seven hundred metres of arcades on each side. On the left side of the street the buildings are linked by terraces, said to be part of a kind of elevated walkway which enabled royals and courtiers to go from the Palace to the river without mingling with the commoners.

The buildings along the street were not inhabited by the high aristocracy, but the rich middle classes which were in great expansion in the 18th century.

A few blocks down from Piazza Castello is the historic *Caffè Fiorio*, which opened in 1780, and came to represent a meeting place for politicians and influential figures. Legend has it that King

Carlo Alberto asked to be informed of the debate there on a daily basis, to obtain useful indications regarding the developments in contemporary politics. On the left side of the street, at number 17, is the 18th-century building which hosted the university and now houses the **Rectorate**. The University of Turin, founded at the beginning of the fifteenth century, numbers among its students and teachers great scientists and academics such as Erasmus of Rotterdam. In the eighteenth century Vittorio Amedeo II donated a great library, which was later transferred to the National Library. The main entrance of the building was originally on the Via Verdi side (which at the time was known as *Via della Zecca*), and a number of architects worked on the design, perhaps including Juvarra and Bertola. One feature worthy of note is the splendid courtyard with its portico.

The two churches on this street, **San Francesco da Paola** and SS. Annunziata, date back to the end of the seventeenth century. The first stands slightly back from the street, interrupting the flow of the arcades: the solemn façade



Via Po: the Rectorate



## Itinerary 1

### Piazza Castello, Via Po and the surrounding area



was designed by Costaguta in 1632 and the main altar is the work of Amedeo di Castellamonte. The **SS. Annunziata church**, almost on the corner of Via Sant'Ottavio, was designed by Carlo Morello in 1650, but redone at the beginning of the twentieth century according to the original plans.

A short distance from Via Po, in Via Montebello, is the *Mole Antonelliana*, which now hosts the National Cinema Museum.

At number 55 Via Po you can visit the Accorsi Foundation **Museum of Decorative Arts**, which opened in 1999 and contains records of every aspect of the Baroque period, from objects of daily use to the priceless furniture of Piffetti.

The street opens onto *Piazza Vittorio Veneto*, which was completed around 1830. Taking Via Principe Amedeo from there, a few blocks further on is **Palazzo D'Azeglio** (at number 34, Via Principe Amedeo), built at the end of the 17th century and designed by Garove. Massimo D'Azeglio was born here in 1798, and the building currently houses the offices of a number of cultural foundations.

Taking a left turn into Via San Massimo then continuing on to Via Giolitti, we come to the **San Giovanni Battista Hospital**, which was built in 1680, designed by Amedeo di Castellamonte. A number of other architects, including Vittone and Castelli, later worked on this building. It was one of the first public hospitals, and was extremely advanced for its day: a two-storey building (the first floor for men, the second for women), with four wings in a Greek cross layout and a dome over the centre, which also had an altar. Part of this complex now houses the *Regional Museum of Natural Science*, which hosts many important exhibitions.

Continuing right into Via Accademia Albertina we come to Piazza Carlo Emanuele II, better known as **Piazza Carlina**, which was designed by Amedeo di Castellamonte as an octagonal space surrounded by buildings in a similar style. Juvarra worked on some of these (*Palazzo Guarene* and the *Santa Croce Church*). A little further on, at Via Accademia Albertina 6, is the **Galleria dell'Accademia Albertina**, which boasts a rich collection of Re-

naissance and Baroque works.

Continuing along Via Maria Vittoria, where it meets Via Carlo Alberto is **Palazzo dal Pozzo della Cisterna**, now the headquarters of the Turin Provincial Administration. Building work began in 1675, but its current appearance is the result of Juvarra-style changes made during the 18th century. From Via Carlo Alberto we reach the square of the same name, overlooked by the *National Library* and the 19th century façade of *Palazzo Carignano*.

Via Cesare Battisti cuts off the square, the outlook of which is closed by **Palazzo Graneri** (Via Bogino, 9), designed in 1683 by Gianfranco Barocelli. During the siege of 1706, the Supreme Command defending the city made its quarters here. From the mid-twentieth century the first floor has hosted the Circolo degli Artisti.

From Piazza Carlo Alberto we can enter the **Galleria Subalpina**, built in 1873 and reinterpreting Baroque-style designs and motifs. Under its vaults there are antiquaries, shops and the renowned *Caffè Baratti & Milano*. The arcade leads back to Piazza Castello.

Via Po: the SS. Annunziata church

## Itinerary 2: Piazza Carignano, Piazza San Carlo and the surrounding area

Along Via Accademia delle Scienze from Piazza Castello, we reach **Piazza Carignano**, a Baroque treasure characterised by the undulating lines of the façade of **Palazzo Carignano**, one of Guarini's masterpieces, which was built between 1679 and 1685.

This building played a fundamental role in the history of Italy, as the birthplace of the sovereigns (Carlo Alberto and Vittorio Emanuele II) who brought about the process of national unification.



In 1848 it became the seat of the Parlamento Subalpino, and in 1861, of the first parliament of the newly-united Italy. To this end it was extended, with the addition of the rear façade which looks over Piazza Carlo Alberto. Palazzo Carignano stands out from the other palaces of Turin for its grandiose

façade, which uses a “poor” material like brick to highlight the interplay of light and shadow. This façade has another curious feature: the windows of the first floor are decorated with a frieze depicting the feathered head-dress of the American Indians. The frieze was created to celebrate the 1667 victory against the Iroquois of a regiment sent to aid the French by the House of Carignano. The palace currently houses the *National Risorgimento Museum*, which explores the history of Italy from 1706 to 1945.

This square is also overlooked by other historic buildings. One of these is the 18th-century **Carignano Theatre**, designed in 1752 by Benedetto Alfieri, Juvarra's successor. Beside the theatre is the prestigious **Ristorante del Cambio**, founded in 1757, which was originally a stagecoach stop and was a favourite with illustrious figures from Casanova to Cavour.

Adjacent to the square, down Via Accademia delle Scienze between Via Principe Amedeo and Via Maria Vittoria, is the ancient *Palazzo dell'Accademia dei Nobili*, now the **Accademia**

**delle Scienze**, designed by Guarini in the second half of the seventeenth century by appointment of the Jesuits. This building features forbidding, solemn lines in line with its original purpose, and since 1824 it has hosted Turin's *Egyptian Museum*, the oldest one of its kind, and the second most important in the world after its counterpart in Cairo. The second floor of the building is home to the *Savoy Gallery*.

Opposite the palace, but facing Via Ma-

ria Vittoria, is the **San Filippo Neri church**. Guarini was commissioned to design this by Maria Giovanna of Savoy-Nemours in 1679, but the architect died when work had just got underway. The project was then entrusted to Juvarra, but he left Turin before it was completed. San Filippo, the biggest church in Turin, also features the chapel dedicated to Sebastiano Valfré, converted from the room belonging to the saint and hero of the siege of Turin.



Palazzo Carignano



## Itinerary 2: Piazza Carignano, Piazza San Carlo and the surrounding area



Facing the church is **Palazzo Carpano** (formerly *Palazzo San Marzano*), which was built in the 1680's, designed by Garove, and then extended in the eighteenth century by Benedetto Alfieri. The spiralling columns in the atrium, staircase and courtyard are particularly spectacular. The building belongs to Carpano, the name associated with the invention of Vermouth at the end of the eighteenth century.

Turning right into Via Maria Vittoria, we come to **Piazza San Carlo**, the former *Piazza Reale*, where wheat and rice markets were held. Designed in the 17th century by Carlo di Castellamonte, Juvarra and Alfieri also worked on various aspects of the project.

This is one of the most beautiful, and famous, squares in Italy, perfect in its layout and harmonious proportions. On the Via Alfieri side, at either side of Via Roma, it is enclosed by the "twin" churches of San Carlo and Santa Cristina, while in the centre of the square is the famed *Caval 'd Brons* (Bronze Horse), a 19th-century equestrian statue depicting Emanuele Filiberto putting his sword back into its scabbard after the victory of San Quintino. In the arcades are two almost legendary caf  s: *Caff   San Carlo*, founded in 1822, and known as a meeting place for the political 'subversives' of the nineteenth century, as well as artists, writers and intellectuals, and its historic rival, *Caff  *

*Torino*, which opened in 1903, and which used to close to the public to ensure that Umberto of Savoy could enjoy a moment's peace and quiet.

The two churches are also masterpieces of Piedmontese Baroque. The **San Carlo church**, on the right side looking from Piazza Castello, was built in 1619, and is attributed to various architects, including Castellamonte. It contains some notable works of art, including the main altar by Castellamonte, and a noteworthy Caravaggio-style painting. The fa  ade was built in the 19th century in line with the style of the twin church, **Santa Cristina**, which was built in 1639, in correspondence with the convent of the Barefooted Carmel-

ites. This church was also designed by Castellamonte, but the splendid fa  ade was designed by Juvarra in 1715.

Alongside the churches are modern-style arcades which date back to the restyling of Via Roma in the 1930's.

A short way along Via Roma towards Porta Nuova, we reach Via Arcivescovado. A right turn on the corner of Via XX Settembre takes us to the **Visitation church**, a 17th-century work by Lanfranchi. Continuing along Via Arcivescovado, on the corner with Via Arsenale is the majestic entrance to **Palazzo dell'Arsenale**, which was one of the most powerful arsenals in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries and is currently the seat of the *Scuola di Applicazio-*

## Itinerary 2: Piazza Carignano, Piazza San Carlo and the surrounding area

*ne d'Arma*. Taking a right turn into Via Arsenale we discover another little Baroque treasure, the **Immacolata Concezione church**, attributed to Guarini. Continuing in the same direction we reach Via Alfieri, and turning left, at number 15, we find **Palazzo Lascaris**, which is currently the headquarters of the Piedmont Regional Council. Designed by Amedeo di Castellamonte in 1665, it was largely reworked in the following century, but without compromising its overall harmony. The entrance is marked by two twisting columns which lead onto an atrium and courtyard with an arcade of great elegance. From Via Alfieri we can carry on along to *Piazza Solferino*, an elegant 19th-century square, and a block further on, on the right, we can take *Via Santa Teresa*, which offers various points of interest: the **San Giuseppe church**, between Via San Francesco d'Assisi and Via dei Mercanti, designed by Lanfranchi and built between 1683 and 90; and at number 20 the splendid **Palazzo Provana di Collegno**, designed by Guarini in 1698. Further on is **Palazzo Compans di Brichanteau**, built in

1730 and designed by Juvarra, and facing that, the **Santa Teresa church**. This was built in the mid-17th century, designed by Andrea Costaguta, and contains a splendid altar by Juvarra. If we turn left into Via XX Settembre and head along towards Via Pietro Micca we can also take in the **San Tommaso church**, which lies at the junction between Via Pietro Micca and Via San Tommaso. After Via Pietro Micca, which links Piazza Castello to Piazza Solferino and cuts diagonally across the criss-cross layout of the streets, was created in the 19th century, the entrance of the church was moved. The most curious fact about this church is that since 1722 it has been the seat of the "Pious Association of Private and Family Cooks of both Sexes, under the Patronage of San Pasquale Baylon". Baylon was a 16th-century friar famed for his exceptional culinary talents, whose confessional was often frequented by church-goers who asked for a few recipes along with their absolution. The most famous of these recipes bears his name: "San Baylon", which became *Sambajùn*, namely Zabaglione.

*Piazza San Carlo: the Santa Cristina church*





### Itinerary 3

## Via and Piazza Palazzo di Città, i Quartieri, la Consolata



This tour takes us into the charming narrow streets of the ancient Roman quadrilateral, where Baroque churches and palaces were built on top of much older sites.

From Piazza Castello we will set off along Via Palazzo di Città, once *Contrada dei Panierai*. A few blocks further along this street opens out onto a square where the wheat market used to be held, but which between the 15th and 16th century was renamed *Piazza Corpus Domini*, after a miraculous event which happened there on the date of that festivity, in 1453. According to the legend, on 6 June that year a thief who had looted the church of Exilles arrived in Turin, but when he reached

that square, the mule carrying his load dug its heels in, the load tumbled out, and a wafer fell out of the stolen monstrance. This wafer hovered in mid-air, and only the Bishop of Turin, after numerous pleas and prayers, managed to coax it down into a chalice.

The site of the miracle became a place of worship: in 1510 a chapel was built there, and in 1609 this was incorporated into the new church built to fulfil a vow made during the plague of 1598. Designed by Ascanio Vitozzi, the **Corpus Domini church** has a single nave with three side chapels; in the 18th century it was adapted and extended by Benedetto Alfieri, and Juvarra designed the magnificent main altar, to which a

shrine by Vittone was then added. Inside the church, a little area enclosed by an attractive railing indicates the site of the miracle. Some of Turin's most illustrious saints worked in this church, including Giuseppe Cottolengo; at number 19 Via Palazzo di Città, there is a plaque commemorating the site where Cottolengo, "with four beds", began his apostolate, which ended with the founding of hospitals for the poor.

The street leads into **Piazza Palazzo di Città**, formerly Piazza delle Erbe, where the market of agricultural produce was held. It was built in the mid-18th century, designed by Benedetto Alfieri, who blended it into the street, creating a perfect balance with the arcades. In the middle of the square we find the statue by Pelagio Palagi which depicts Amedeo VI of Savoy (known as "il Conte Verde") hero of the Crusades. Completing the square is the 17th century building which now hosts the Turin City administration. Opened in 1663, **Palazzo di Città** was designed by Lanfranchi, and over the following century various architects, including Alfieri and Castelli, worked to extend it.

Inside it has a grand courtyard, and a majestic staircase leading up to the *Sala Marmi* on the first floor. Other important areas include the *Sala delle Congregazioni*, with many important paintings, and the *Sala Rossa*, which is where the Turin City Council sits. A corridor alongside the staircase leads to the *Cortile del Burro*, the name of which is a trace of the time when the area was a market place.

Going along Via Milano, on the corner of Via San Domenico is the church of the same name, the only Medieval church which survived the restylings of the Baroque period. Beside the church was the Court of the Inquisition.

Continuing along this street, near Piazza della Repubblica, we can see the **Basilica Mauriziana**, built towards the end of the 17th century and then donated by Vittorio Amedeo II to the Order of St. Maurice. In the sacristy there is a processional float made of papier maché which was designed by Francesco Ladatte. In 1729, Juvarra designed the square in front of the church.

Turning left into Via Santa Chiara, at number 8 is **Palazzo Novarina di San**

Palazzo di Città



### Itinerary 3

## Via and Piazza Palazzo di Città, i Quartieri, la Consolata

**Sebastiano**, worked on by Vittone and others. The palace, now a private condominium, was the setting for the love story between Vittorio Amedeo II and Teresa Canalis. Both bereaved, the two married and Canalis became Marchesa di Spigno, but the story does not have a happy ending: after abdicating and then trying but failing to take the throne once more in 1731, the couple were arrested and after the death of the former king the Marquise was imprisoned in Ceva in the prostitutes' jail, then in the Monastero della Visitazione in Pine-rolo, where she died in 1769.

Turning right into Via Bellezia we come to Piazza Emanuele Filiberto, behind the huge Porta Palazzo market. This square is overlooked by restaurants and shops selling local produce. Taking Via Sant'Agostino we come to the **Sant'Agostino church** on the corner of Via S. Chiara. The current look of the church is the result of work on a building which dates back to the 11th century, and is known by the sinister nickname of the "hangman's church": the city executioner was entitled to a pew here, and was buried under the bell tower.

Doubling back and taking a left turn into Via Bonelli, we find a picturesque little street, with traditional workshops and multi-ethnic shops. Crossing Via delle Orfane, the tiny Via Maria Adelaide leads to Piazza della Consolata, overlooked by the *Basilica di Santa Maria Consolatrice*, better known as **La Consolata**, Turin's most important shrine. Its origins date back to San Massimo, the first bishop of Turin in the fourth century A.D. On this site the Benedictines of Novalesa built a church, where they took refuge when their abbey was invaded by the Saracens in the tenth century. The religious nucleus of the site was an ancient icon of the Virgin, reputed to be miraculous. The church was completely rebuilt between the 17th and 18th centuries, and work continued until the end of the 19th century, with the involvement of Vitozzi, Guarini and Juvarra, among others. The result is a unique structure set out in a series of communicating areas, and with extraordinary coloured marble decorations that the recent restoration has brought back to their original splendour. The ancient origins of the

*La Consolata: the altar and the icon of the Virgin*





## Itinerary 3

### Via and Piazza Palazzo di Città, i Quartieri, la Consolata

church are borne out by the Romanesque bell tower in the little square in front of the entrance to the church.

Right opposite the church, beside one of the city's oldest herbalists' shops, is another historic venue: *Bicerin*, a chocolate shop founded in 1763, which takes its name from the renowned, wonderful drink made from chocolate, coffee and cream.

Coming back to Via delle Orfane, at number 15 we find the **Santa Chiara church**, designed by Vittone in 1742. The church, and adjoining monastery, were built on the site of the convent of the Clarisse nuns. Particularly worthy of note are the effects of light that Vittone managed to create, knowingly positioning the various architectural elements to draw emphasis to the symbolic meaning of light and purity evoked by the name of the order itself.

Continuing along Via delle Orfane, to the right on the corner of Via San Domenico is the little **SS. Annunziata church**, known as "delle Orfane", built in 1579 for the female orphanage which was established in 1550. The church underwent a number of exten-

sions, and in the second half of the 17th century there was the addition of a crypt for the burial of residents.

Since 2000 the church has been used by the Greek Orthodox community, and has been given the name of the *Parish Church of San Giovanni Battista*.

Beside the church is one of the most beautiful buildings in Turin, **Palazzo Barolo**. At the beginning of the 17th century this belonged to the counts Provana di Druent, the last descendant of whom married Gerolamo Falletti di Barolo. Important extension and restoration works were carried out between the 17th and 18th centuries by Baroncelli, who created the atrium and splendid staircase of honour, and Benedetto Alfieri. The palace is especially linked to the figures of Tancredi and Giulia di Barolo, who established numerous philanthropic and charity institutions in the 19th century. Silvio Pellico also lived and worked in the building for a lengthy period, and died here in 1854. We have reached the junction with Via Corte d'Appello: immediately on the left is the building that until a few years ago housed the Turin Court. Designed by

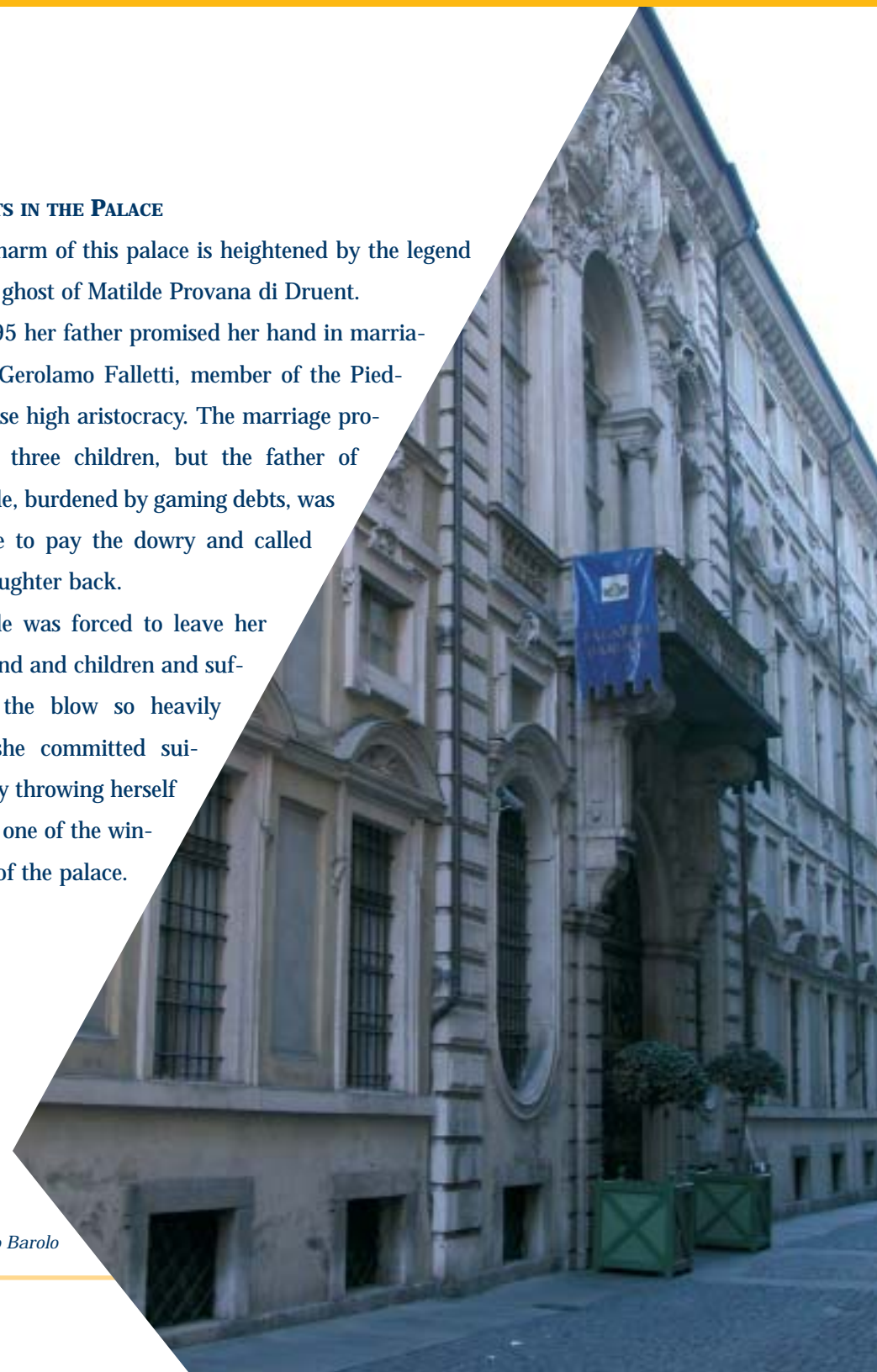
#### GHOSTS IN THE PALACE

The charm of this palace is heightened by the legend of the ghost of Matilde Provana di Druent.

In 1695 her father promised her hand in marriage to Gerolamo Falletti, member of the Piedmontese high aristocracy. The marriage produced three children, but the father of Matilde, burdened by gaming debts, was unable to pay the dowry and called his daughter back.

Matilde was forced to leave her husband and children and suffered the blow so heavily that she committed suicide by throwing herself out of one of the windows of the palace.

Palazzo Barolo



### Itinerary 3

## Via and Piazza Palazzo di Città, i Quartieri, la Consolata



Juvarra in 1720 and completed by Benedetto Alfieri, the palace was built on the site of the ancient *Carceri Senatorie*, and also hosted the Senate and Camera Regia. To the right, the street

ends in Piazza Savoia, formerly *Piazza Susina*, characterised by the small obelisk put there in the 19th century.

At number 1 Via della Consolata, immediately to the left of the square, is **Palazzo Saluzzo Paesana**, designed by Plantery and built from 1715. This is a grand, lavish building around a huge courtyard with arcades. In recent years it has been restored, and currently houses offices, company headquarters and private apartments.

From Piazza Savoia, where Via del Carmine meets Via Bligny (formerly Via delle Scuole), is the Madonna del Carmine church, which was built behind the ancient Monastery of the Shod Carmelites (later renamed *Convitto Um-*

*berto I*, built from 1718 from a design by Plantery). The **Carmine church** was Juvarra's last work in Turin before he moved to the Spanish court. His skilful design of the side chapels creates extraordinary effects of light, and the church also contains a precious altarpiece by Beaumont.

With the church behind us, we can head along via Bligny and then turn left into Via Santa Chiara, where on the left is the "**Spedale de' Pazzarelli**", a mental hospital built between 1728 and 1734 by the SS. Sudario Brotherhood, which had been appointed by the king to take in the "lunatics" in a discreet location. Beside the *Spedale*, a few years later the **SS. Sudario church** was

built, with an entrance from Via Piave. Continuing along this street and then going back into Via del Carmine, where this meets Corso Valdocco we find the **Quartieri Militari**, designed by Juvarra in 1718 for Vittorio Amedeo II, to provide quarters for the soldiers of the Savoy army, and as a gateway to the city. The imposing style of the two buildings, placed symmetrically on either side of Via del Carmine, is livened up by the red brickwork and moulding. In the second half of the eighteenth century Ignazio Birago di Borgaro created the upper floor of the complex. A block further on from Corso Valdocco, we come to Via Garibaldi (formerly *Via Dora Grossa*), a pedestrian street



Above: La Consolata, the Quartieri,  
the SS. Sudario church.  
Left: the Carmine church



### Itinerary 3

## Via and Piazza Palazzo di Città, i Quartieri, la Consolata



which links Piazza Castello and Piazza Statuto and offers a splendid view of Juvarra's façade of Palazzo Madama.

A little further on, just past Via della Consolata, we come to Via della Misericordia, with the *San Giovanni Decollato*, or della **Misericordia church**, from the name of the Brotherhood it belonged to, which assisted prisoners and the condemned. Also known as the "church of the hanged men", who were buried here, it was adapted by Filippo Nicolis di Robilant in the mid-eighteenth century, while the façade was built in the nineteenth century.

We will now head up **Via Barbaroux**, one of the oldest streets in Turin. In the square which opens up at the junction with Via Stampatori we find the **Archivio Storico della Città di Torino**, which conserves seven centuries' worth of records of city life and an example of *Theatrum Sabaudiae*, the work commissioned by Vittorio Amedeo II in 1682 to illustrate the cities, castles and lands of the Savoy kingdom.

A little further on, to the right, the street widens out, and there is a "Toretto" (the traditional drinking fountain of Turin): this is Piazzetta dell'Università

dei Maestri Minusieri. This leads to Vicolo Santa Maria, where at number 7 there is a plaque commemorating the foundation of the aforementioned university in 1636 (in actual fact this was not an academic institution but a corporation). This little road, which veers slightly to the left, leads to the **Santa Maria di Piazza church**, of which there are records as far back as the 11th century, and which was completely rebuilt by Vittone in the 18th century. Leaving the church behind us, a left turn first into Via Santa Maria (which after Via Botero takes the name of Via Monte di Pietà), and then again into Via San Francesco d'Assisi, takes us to the church of the same name, which dates back to the visit of the Saint in 1214. The **San Francesco d'Assisi church** was rebuilt by Vittone in 1761. Its chapels are dedicated to the patron saints of various corporations: Sant'Omobono (tailors), Sant'Anna (bricklayers and architects), and San Pietro (Master Blacksmiths). A little further on is the **church of San Rocco**, designed by Lanfranchi and built in 1667 for the Brotherhood which handled the burial of corpses

found on the streets. Inside, as well as a splendid wooden choir, there is an altar dedicated to Sant'Avventino, the saint that migraine-sufferers turn to.

Once back in Via Garibaldi, we can continue on a little way to find two adjacent religious buildings: the first is the *Cappella dei Banchieri e Mercanti* – the **Chapel of Bankers and Merchants** – now part of a building which belonged to the Jesuits, with pews laid out lengthwise in two groups, so that the members of the two corporations could resume their negotiations at the end of the service. Beside the chapel is the **SS. Martiri church**, commissioned by Emanuele Filiberto at the end of the 16th century. The main altar was designed by Juvarra and there are some splendid wooden sculptures dating from the seventeenth century. The vault was completed by Vittone. The church also contains the ashes of the Martyr Saints Solutore, Avventore and Ottavio. Continuing towards Piazza Castello, on the corner of Via XX Settembre is the **SS. Trinità church**. It was designed by Ascanio Vitozzi, who is buried there, and the marble decorative elements were designed by Juvarra.

## Itinerary 4

### The river, the hills and the surrounding area

There are other extraordinary Baroque pieces in less central areas, such as on the hills which frame the city, and in the surrounding area.

Overlooking the Po, where its reflection is of great effect, the **Valentino Castle** has late Medieval origins, but the most illustrious chapter in its history begins in the second half of the 16th century, when it became the property of the Savoy. Around 1630 Carlo and Amedeo di Castellamonte worked there, appointed by Madama Reale Cristina of France. They transformed the huge villa into a



castle and skilfully blended French and Italian styles. Inside it is richly decorated, each room with a different theme which features both in the stuccoes and the ceiling frescoes. The castle currently houses the Faculty of Architecture.

Above: the Valentino castle

Right: Villa della Regina as represented in the "Theatrum Sabaudiae"

On the other side of the Po, the road from the Gran Madre church leads to **Villa della Regina**, commissioned by Cardinal Maurizio of Savoy at the beginning of the 17th century. It takes its name from the fact that at the end of the 17th century the villa passed to Anne of Orléans, wife of Vittorio Amedeo II. It was likely to have been Vitozzi who created the general outline of the project, but the grand complex, which follows the line of the hills, with an alternation of stairways, pavilions, gardens and water features was worked on by various architects, including Amedeo di Castellamonte and Juvarra. After a long period of abandon and decay, an important restoration project was initiated, and most of the building and gardens have already been restored.

Following the directions along the hill road we come to the *Santa Maria al Monte church*, better known as **Monte dei Cappuccini**. Since ancient times the hill it lies on was used as a strategic defensive point, and the presence of a church there is documented from the thirteenth century. In the second half of the sixteenth century the Savoy,

into whose possession it had passed in the meantime, gave it to the Capuchin friars, and also commissioned the construction of a church with adjoining monastery. Various architects, including Ascanio Vitozzi and Carlo di Castellamonte, were involved in the work, and in the 18th century the church was embellished with a number of precious paintings. After monastic orders were outlawed in the Napoleonic period, the monastery was abandoned for some

time and then reworked and extended: the dome, for example was incorporated into the octagonal drum which is the key feature of the complex today. Devastated by bombing in the Second World War, the complex has recently been restored. It is once again a monastery, and one wing of the building hosts the National Museum of the Mountains. Following the course of the river, in Corso Casale after Piazza Borromini is the **Madonna del Pilone church**. This





## Itinerary 4

### The river, the hills and the surrounding area



takes its name from the shrine dedicated to the 'Vergine Annunziata' which was situated here in ancient times, and which was replaced by the church after the miracle which occurred here on 29 April 1644: a little girl fell in the river and only the intervention of the Virgin prevented her from being squashed by the blades of the watermills on this stretch of river. The shrine was not demolished, but incorporated into the church, which became a place of worship of some importance, and an entire district of the city developed around it. Further along we reach Borgata Sassi, where it is possible to take the train up the characteristic cog railway through the greenery up 670 metres to see the

**Basilica di Superga**, which in chronological terms was Filippo Juvarra's first masterpiece in Turin.

It was built to fulfil a vow made by Vittorio Amedeo II during the siege of Turin in 1706. He had climbed up the hill with his cousin, Prince Eugenio of Savoy, to study battle plans, and in front of a shrine there made a vow to build a great place of worship in the event of victory. In 1710 he appointed Antonio Bertola (the great military architect who designed the Fort of Fenestrelle) to work on the project, and chose the cheapest of the designs which were presented, in view of the fact that his desire to keep his promise had to fall in line with the conditions of a state which

had just suffered many years of war. However that was the time when Filippo Juvarra came to Turin, and though the designs he presented to the king were more costly, they were undoubtedly much better able to represent the glories of the young Savoy state.

The essential components of the Basilica, which lies on a hill top and can be seen from a great distance, were built in a relatively short time, and it was consecrated in 1731. It features a central plan along Roman lines with a majestic pronaos with eight columns that is accessed from three grandiose staircases. The church has a 65 metre high dome, and two bell towers standing alongside the main section. In the part

behind it Juvarra created a building destined for the Congregation of the Canon Regulars which was responsible for training the bishops of the Savoy kingdom.

Inside, the church is ornately decorated and the SS. Sacramento Chapel contains the wooden statue of the Virgin before which Vittorio Amedeo is said to have taken his vow. The lower section of the church houses the tombs of the Savoy kings and princes from Vittorio Amedeo II to Carlo Alberto.

In the avenue which runs behind the Basilica there is a plaque commemorating the place where the plane carrying the Torino football team crashed on 4 May 1949.

*Above: Monte dei Cappuccini,  
Basilica di Superga, Palazzina di Caccia di Stupinigi*



## Itinerary 4

### The river, the hills and the surrounding area

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Savoy commissioned the construction or embellishment of many buildings around the capital which became residences to be used according to the season, needs and preferences of the sovereigns (for hunting, entertaining, affairs of state and so on), in addition to their town residences.

In the province of Turin the best known are the Palazzina di Caccia di Stupinigi and the castles of Moncalieri, Rivoli, Venaria and Agliè.

#### **The Palazzina di Caccia di Stupinigi**

The Palazzina is the last of the great Savoy residences, in chronological terms, and was built from scratch (that is, not adapted from an older building), designed by Filippo Juvarra as a marvellous white complex which appears unexpectedly on the horizon, at the end of a straight, wide, poplar-lined avenue. In 1729, Vittorio Amedeo II commissioned the royal architect to construct a venue for socialising and entertaining before and after the great hunting trips that the king and court engaged in, accompanied by scores of servants.

At Stupinigi, just like in all his works, Juvarra was in complete charge: he personally selected all the painters, cabinet-makers and decorators and strictly supervised their work, supplying instructions, sketches and designs.

While the central hub was constructed in the space of two-three years, the building of Stupinigi went on throughout the 18th century, and even after Juvarra had left Turin for Madrid (where he died in 1736) his work was continued by skilled architects such as Prunotto, Benedetto Alfieri and Ludovico Bo, who completed the project without compromising the overall style. Opened on 5 November 1731, the Palazzina hosted balls, concerts, banquets and visits of state and was often frequented by the royal family up to the beginning of the twentieth century.

The layout of the building, comprising a central section with four arms extending out and forming a double courtyard, creates a marvellous interplay between internal and external areas. The heart of the Palazzina is the great Hall with its majestic windows and copper-covered dome, topped by the

*Stupinigi: the great hall*





## Itinerary 4

### The river, the hills and the surrounding area

bronze deer by Ladatte (the French-sounding version of his real name, Ladetti). In recent years this has been replaced by a copy and the original is on display in the ticket office.

The Palazzina is set in vast grounds, which were part of the king's hunting estate. Juvarra supervised all the decorative work on the Palazzina, starting from the great hall, with rather unassuming frescoes by the brothers Giuseppe and Domenico Valeriani. There are works of a higher standard by other artists, such as Giovan Battista Crosato, who created the most beautiful fresco in the entire complex, *The Sacrifice of Iphigenia*, which decorates the ceiling of the Queen's Antechamber; the quadrature painter (i.e. a painter of architectural designs, scrolls and frames) Girolamo Mengozzi Colonna; and above all Scipione and Vittorio Amedeo Cignaroli. The latter created the four famous canvases in the *Sala degli Scudieri* dedicated to the deer hunt. The sculptors, apart from Ladatte, included Giuseppe Marocco, who created the thirty-six appliques in the great central hall, designed by Juvarra himself. But

in Stupinigi the furniture was even more spectacular than the artwork, some of it original and some from other Savoy residences, created by the greatest master cabinet-makers of the day. Beside the Palazzina is the splendid *Stupinigi Parish Church*, or **Church of the Visitation**, designed by Juvarra as part of the complex which also included the farmhouses and was completed by his successors. The church is very simple in terms of both structure and decoration, and this is due to the fact that it was mainly destined for the farm workers from the farmhouses, as the court and sovereigns used the lavish *Sant'Uberto Chapel* inside the Palazzina.

The church has a single nave, with barrel vaults, and conserves the remains of Sant'Uberto. At the end of the eighteenth century it was extended, according to a design by Ludovico Bo, and an external cemetery was added.

#### **How to get to the Palazzina:**

*The Palazzina lies at the end of a long avenue which is a continuation of Corso Unione Sovietica.*

*Distance from the centre of Turin: around 15 km.*

#### **Castello di Moncalieri**

*Piazza Baden Baden, Moncalieri*

This ancient construction dates back to before the thirteenth century. Originally a fortress, in the mid-15th century it was restyled and turned into a castle.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century Carlo Emanuele I and Cristina of France appointed Carlo and Amedeo di Castellamonte to convert the castle and the result was a structure composed of four pavilions united by galleries and corner towers which recall the original construction.

It was a particular favourite of Vittorio Amedeo II, who made it his main residence, and in the second half of the eighteenth century work got underway on the gardens.

At present part of the castle is the headquarters of the "Piemonte" First Battalion of Carabinieri.

#### **How to get to the Castle:**

*Cross one of the bridges over the Po, turn right and follow Corso Moncalieri along the riverside.*

*Distance from the centre of Turin: around 10 km.*

#### **Castello di Rivoli**

*Piazza Mafalda di Savoia, Rivoli*

Rivoli Castle is also of Medieval origin, and for a long time remained a fortress, which Emanuele Filiberto extended and built up.

In the seventeenth century it became one of the "delights" of Carlo Emanuele I, who entrusted the project to Carlo di Castellamonte.

However its strategic position at the start of the road to France meant that the building suffered serious damage in various conflicts.

In 1718, Vittorio Amedeo II commissioned Juvarra to transform the complex, but the grandiose plans to make it into a splendid official residence were left off in 1730 and after that the castle's fortune varied.

In recent times it was restored and since 1984 it has hosted the Museum of Contemporary Art, one of the main institutions of its kind in Europe.

#### **How to get to the Castle:**

*Travel the length of Corso Francia up to Rivoli, then follow signs to the castle.*

*Distance from the centre of Turin: around 15 km.*

## Itinerary 4

### The river, the hills and the surrounding area

#### Reggia di Venaria Reale

Easily accessible from the north Turin ring road, “La Venaria” was intended to be the Versailles of the House of Savoy: not only a magnificent venue, but also the representation of the monarchy and its glories. This is why it was conceived on such a large scale, a single project which encompassed the castle, grounds and village.

Work began under Carlo Emanuele II in the second half of the 17th century and continued for over one hundred and



fifty years. Various architects worked on it, including Carlo di Castellamonte, but the palace became particularly famous for the contribution made by Juvarra, with the spectacular *Galleria di Diana*. As its name suggests the palace was mainly built for the royal

hunts, and the internal decorations repeatedly echo this theme.

During the 18th century the complex gradually lost this role, in favour of Stupinigi, and in the 19th century it became a barracks. It was then abandoned for a long period of time, until the recent restoration work which has enabled it to be opened to the public and created a venue for cultural and musical events. Linked to Venaria is the enormous **Parco della Mandria**, created as a hunting estate for the king, and within which the Juvarra-designed **Palazzina della Mandria** was built. This is where the horses used during the hunt were bred and stabled. The castle and park were keenly frequented by Vittorio Emanuele II, and in the nineteenth century more constructions were added onto it, such as that known as *La Bizzarria*, where the king used to meet his favourite, “La Bela Rosin”.

#### **How to get to the Reggia:**

*Corso Grosseto, north ring road, Venaria/Druento exit, then follow signs for the Reggia.*

*Distance from the centre of Turin: around 15 km.*

*Castello Ducale di Agliè*

#### Castello Ducale di Agliè

This castle, in the south of the Canavese area, has Medieval origins and in the 17th century its owner entrusted its conversion to Carlo di Castellamonte, whose work can still be seen in the part which overlooks the gardens, the main hall and the chapel. In the 18th century the complex was bought by the Savoy and became the residence of the Duke of Chiabrese (the son of Carlo Emanuele III), and the architect Ignazio Birago di Borgaro was appointed to make a number of changes.



Abandoned after the invasion of Napoleon, the castle flourished once more in the 19th century, as King Carlo Felice chose it as his favourite residence, along with the castle of Govone. The castle still features a variety of Baroque furnishings, and is famed for its gardens and greenhouses.

#### **How to get to Agliè:**

*Turin-Aosta motorway, San Giorgio Canavese exit, S.P. 53, once in Agliè follow signs to the castle.*

*Distance from the centre of Turin: around 39 km.*



# Alessandria and the surrounding area

The remains of the Baroque period in Alessandria include the **Conservatorio**, which dates back to the 18th century, and the **Prefettura**, created by Benedetto Alfieri in 1731. This was his first important work, and made him known to the Savoy court.

In the province of Alessandria, there is an illustrious example of Baroque art in Casale Monferrato, namely its splendid **synagogue**, a tribute to the importance of the Jewish community in Casale, which is recorded as far back as the 15th century. While the exterior of the synagogue does not present any outstanding characteristics, the interior shows the ornate decorations which resulted from the 18th century reworking in Baroque-Rococo style, which has not been compromised by later work. In the women's gallery there is a permanent exhibition featuring religious furnishings and artefacts dating from the 17th and 18th centuries.

Outside the city is an important site from the age which goes from Mannerism to Baroque: the **Sacro Monte of Crea**. The 'Sacri Monti', or Holy Mounts, recently proclaimed UNESCO

World Heritage Sites, are monumental complexes located on hillside sites. They feature a natural upward progression, offering believers a path towards wisdom and expiation marked by prayer in a series of chapels, and represent one of the main expressions of popular religious spirit between the 15th and 18th centuries. Piedmont has a total of thirteen of these sites.

Not far from Casale, the Sacro Monte of Crea is the only one in southern Piedmont and lies on a hill which was considered holy land from pre-Christian times, and which first featured a small chapel dedicated to the Virgin, and then the Sacro Monte itself, built in the sixteenth century to copy the one in Varallo. Baroque sites in Crea, as well as the *Basilica*, which was built in the seventeenth century but later reworked, include the so-called *Cappella del Paradiso*, created in the seventeenth century by two Flemish brothers Jean and Nicolas De Wespín, known as "I Tabacchetti". The vast composition features over three hundred figures set out in three circles and decreasing in size to create an effect of perspective.



*Sacro Monte di Crea:  
the Cappella del Paradiso*

# Asti and the surrounding area



The most important Baroque sites in Asti and the surrounding area are linked to the name of **Benedetto Alfieri** (1699-1749), of the well-known Asti family, whose most illustrious representative was the man of letters Vittorio.

Benedetto Alfieri became an architect after a brief legal career, and worked with Ignazio Bertola and Filippo Juvarra, who he succeeded as First Engineer of the Savoy Court in 1739. In his home town Alfieri worked on the project to extend and convert **Palazzo Alfieri**, the family residence (at 175 Corso Alfieri), which now hosts the Civic Library and the Alfieri Museum. On the same street, at number 350, we find another of Alfieri's works, **Palazzo Ottolenghi**, with its great, lavishly decorated and frescoed hall featuring a spectacular gilded lamp.

Alfieri also worked on the **Municipio**, in Piazza San Secondo, creating the façade, extending the town council hall and grand stairway of honour.

Alfieri was also responsible for the **Seminario Vescovile**, in the square of the same name. It is a solemn-looking

building befitting the status of the bishop who commissioned it, an advocate of a sober lifestyle.

Alfieri also worked on the building of the **Archivio di Stato**, at 24 Via Tancredi, a complex which was created in the thirteenth century as a monastery, then later reworked.

In the Baroque period new dormitories, a choir and bell tower, later demolished, were added, based on designs by Alfieri and later Francesco Dell'Ala.

The most outstanding building in Asti is the **Santa Maria Assunta** Cathedral (8 Piazza San Giovanni), a construction which represents many centuries of art. The structure of the cathedral is Gothic, but in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries chapels and altars were added, such as that of SS. Trinità and the Chapel of the Epiphany, embellished with a large silver statue of the Virgin, built to fulfil a vow after the defeat of the French in 1706. In the second half of the eighteenth century Vittone worked on this building, adapting the apse and choir.

Outside the city, another important site is **San Martino Alfieri Castle**, around

fifteen kilometres from the city after Isola and Costigliole. This building, designed by Antonio Bertola, was constructed between the end of the seventeenth century and beginning of the eighteenth century, therefore over a rather long period, because at the time Bertola, a great military architect, was involved in numerous projects which became urgent due to the wars Piedmont was waging at the time.

Another important site is **Magliano Alfieri Castle**, the result of a mid-17th-century conversion of a building dating back to the Middle Ages. The castle, which Vittorio Alfieri lived in on several occasions, lies on the top of a hill and now hosts a *Museum of Popular Art and Traditions*. In particular there are examples of the ancient plaster ceilings which were widespread in the area, also in many farmhouses and rural dwellings. The presence of many gypsum quarries in the area made this material widely available and enabled people to reproduce and reinterpret the decorative motifs of courtly Baroque, at prices that even the lower classes could afford.

Asti: Palazzo Alfieri



# Biella and the surrounding area

In the province of Biella, in a natural setting of extraordinary beauty, is the **Sacro Monte di Oropa**, which developed around the Shrine dedicated to the Black Madonna, still a popular object of worship.

The complex extends up the ridge of Monte Mucrone and features 17 chapels, some of great architectural value, built between 1620 and 1720.

Building work thus got underway while the Counter Reformation was in full swing, and in the context of the great revival of popular religious spirit which ensued, the Shrine and Holy Mount immediately attracted great numbers of pilgrims and believers. At the same time the construction and adornment of the structures was greatly aided by legacies and donations from the local aristocratic families and the Savoy. In the 18th century great architects such as Francesco Gallo and Pietro Giuseppe Beltramo worked on it. In the second half of the 18th century the latter created the splendid grey stone staircase that leads to the “sacred square”, or *Prato della Madonna*, the original design of which was probably the work of Juvarra.

Unlike the other Holy Mounts in Piedmont, which developed in wooded areas, Oropa mostly lies in a huge sloping meadow, in such a way that the chapels are all visible, and only at the summit does the field give way to wooded land. In common with the other Holy Mounts, however, this complex was constructed using local materials and labour: clay from Biella for the sculptures, and local craftsmen who put the experience gained in Varallo and Crea into practice.

There are splendid chapels created by the brothers Giovanni and Melchiorre d'Errico: the one dedicated to the Coronation of the Virgin, or *Paradise Chapel*, features a total of 156 life-sized figures, many of which have hair and beards made of plant fibre.

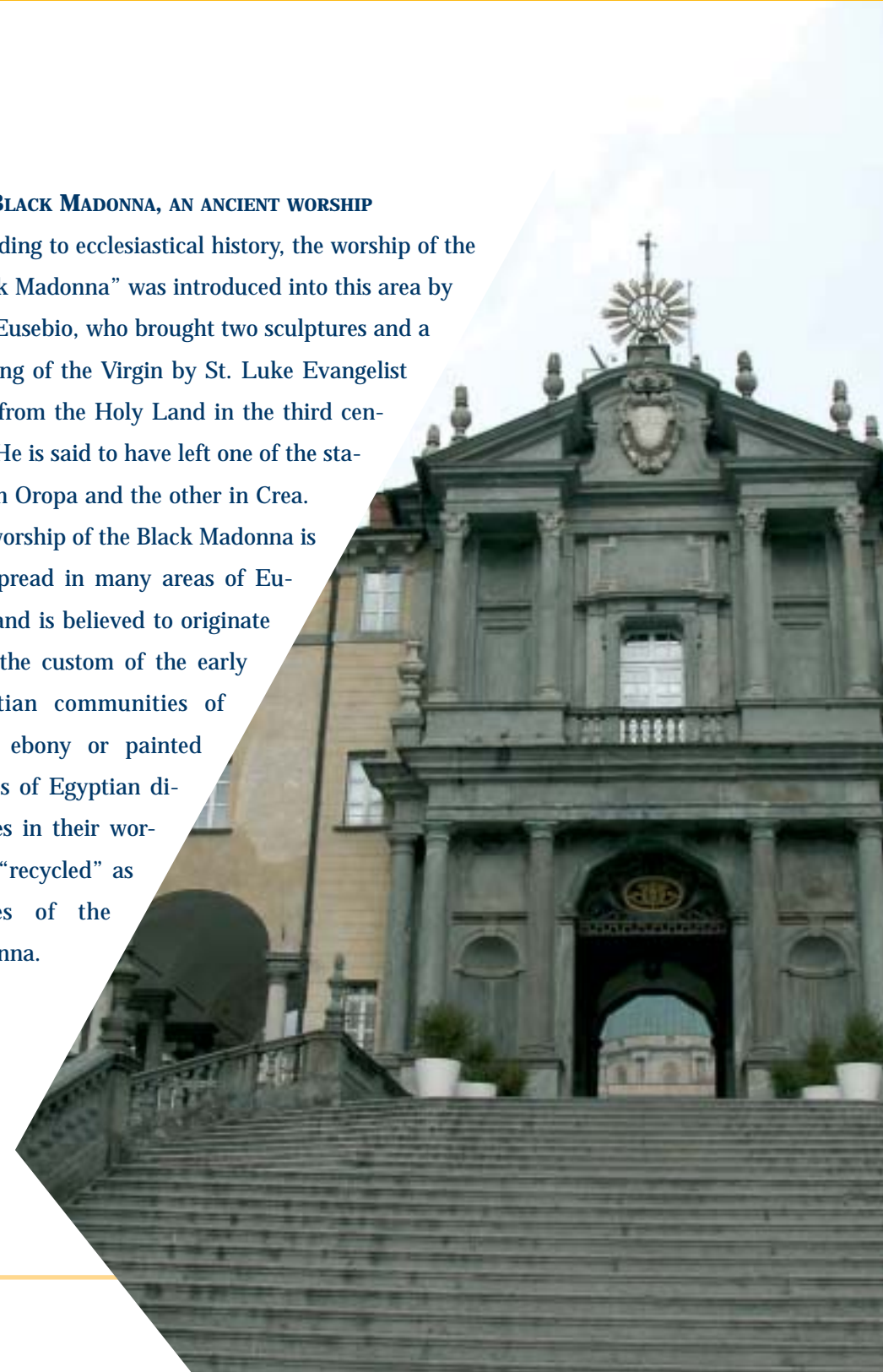
It is interesting to note that the chapel dedicated to the *Nozze di Cana* was funded by the town of Lessona, renowned for its wine, which wished to link this product with the religious setting.

## ***How to get to Oropa***

*Turin-Milan motorway, Santhià exit, SS 143 towards Biella, then SS 144. Distance from Turin: around 89 km.*

## **THE BLACK MADONNA, AN ANCIENT WORSHIP**

According to ecclesiastical history, the worship of the “Black Madonna” was introduced into this area by Sant'Eusebio, who brought two sculptures and a painting of the Virgin by St. Luke Evangelist back from the Holy Land in the third century. He is said to have left one of the statues in Oropa and the other in Crea. The worship of the Black Madonna is widespread in many areas of Europe and is believed to originate from the custom of the early Christian communities of using ebony or painted statues of Egyptian divinities in their worship, “recycled” as images of the Madonna.



*Sacro Monte di Oropa: the great staircase*

# Cuneo and the surrounding area



The Baroque sites in the Cuneo area include some important Savoy residences, and one of the main Marian shrines.

## **Racconigi Castle**

This castle, around thirty kilometres outside Turin, owes its current aspect to work carried out between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries to adapt a Medieval structure which belonged to the Marquises of Saluzzo, and Acaia, and lastly to the Savoy. Around 1620 Guarino Guarini worked on the conversion of the complex and designed the façade which overlooks the beautiful gardens, which were created in the same period by André Le

Nôtre (the famous landscape architect of Louis XIV) in the French style, with fountains, statues and water features. The Neoclassical style south façade, which faces the town of Racconigi, was created at the end of the eighteenth century by Giovan Battista Borra, a student of Vittone's, but does not compromise the stylistic unity of the structure. This castle stands out for having been inhabited continuously throughout its history. It hosted official functions, visits of state, and in 1904 Umberto II was born there.

### ***How to get to the Castle:***

*South ring road, Carmagnola exit, SS 20 to Racconigi.*

*Distance from Turin: around 39 km.*

## **Govone Castle**

The original nucleus of this structure, in a strategic hill-top position, dates back to just after the year 1000.

At the end of the 17th century the owner of the manor appointed Guarino Guarini to extend and embellish the building, but the work was never finished due to the wars which Piedmont was involved in between the end of the 17th century and the Battle of Assietta in 1747. Work restarted in 1778 under various architects, perhaps including Alfieri. In 1792 the castle was purchased by the Savoy and after changing fortunes in the Napoleonic period, Govone, along with Agliè, became the favourite residence of King Carlo Felice. Since the end of the 19th century the castle has been the property of the town of Govone. Inside it boasts ornate decorations, many from the palace of Venaria, *chinoiseries* and furnishings in particular.

### ***How to get to the Castle:***

*Turin-Piacenza motorway, Asti Ovest exit, SS 231 towards Isola d'Asti, Costigliole, Govone.*

*Distance from Turin: around 75 km.*

## **The Certosa of Valcasotto**

This complex, which lies in the Valcasotto hamlet of Pamparato, started life in ancient times as a Carthusian monastery. During its long history it has been subject to fire and looting, and in the 17th and 18th centuries it was largely reworked by Francesco Gallo and Bernardo Vittone, who designed the façade. The complex is composed of a central section with two front wings.

At the end of the 18th century the monastery was occupied by Napoleon's troops, and after the order to abolish all monastic orders it was sold off to private individuals, before being recovered by Carlo Alberto, who turned it into a royal residence, restoring a number of sections. His successor Vittorio Emanuele II also came here often, using it as a hunting estate. It was later sold once more by Umberto I. In 2000 the monastery passed to the Piedmont Region and is now open to the public.

### ***How to get to the Certosa:***

*Turin-Savona motorway, Niella Tanaro exit, Strada Provinciale 60 towards San Michele Mondovì, Pamparato.*

*Distance from Turin: around 110 km.*



As well as the Savoy residences in the province of Cuneo there is also one of the region's top religious destinations, the **Santuario di Vicoforte**, or to give it its proper name, the *Santuario Basilica del Monte Regale*.

This is a place with a fascinating history. In Medieval times there was a modest shrine with a fresco depicting a Madonna and Child. At the end of the 15th century, during a hunting trip, a hunter mistakenly hit the image of the Virgin herself. Stunned, he hung his harquebus on the shrine (the gun is still kept in the Shrine) and set about repairing the damage and making amends for his sin, with prayers and fund-raising.

In a short space of time, the image and the chapel acquired fame as a miraculous setting, attracting increasing numbers of pilgrims, including Duke Carlo Emanuele I of Savoy, who commissioned Ascanio Vitozzi to construct a large shrine there in 1596. Work was interrupted after the deaths of the architect and the duke, and resumed again in the eighteenth century under Francesco Gallo, who created a gran-

diose project with the feature that still makes its unique today: a huge elliptical dome, 74 metres high and with diameters of 25 and 36 metres – making it the largest in Europe.

The decorative work on such a large surface – over six thousand square metres – was a colossal job, completed in the mid-eighteenth century by Mattia Bortoloni and Felice Biella.

Alongside the Shrine was a Cistercian monastery and other constructions to accommodate pilgrims and provide assistance to the sick.

Inside, the frescoed dome and the skilful positioning of the huge oval windows creates some extraordinary effects of light.

In the centre of the building there is a lavishly decorated little shrine housing a silver case with the fifteenth-century image of the Madonna. The site also hosts the tomb of Carlo Emanuele I, who so desired it to be built.

### ***How to get to the Santuario:***

*Turin-Savona motorway, Niella Tanaro exit, Strada Provinciale 60 towards S. Michele Mondovì-Vicoforte.*

*Distance from Turin: around 93 km.*



*Cuneo: the Santuario di Vicoforte*



# Novara and the surrounding area

The historic town centre of Novara, with its Medieval layout, does not present many Baroque sites. However the **Basilica di San Gaudenzio**, which dates back to the 16th century, contains 59 Baroque and Mannerist-style statues created between the 17th and 19th centuries, and **Casa Bossi** is a beautiful example of an 18th-century house, although it was largely modified by An-tonelli in the following century. Also of interest is **Palazzo Caccia-piatti Fossati**, built in the second half of the 17th century and featuring windows adorned with white stuccoes.

Meanwhile there are more important sites in one of the most picturesque and famous areas of Piedmont, that of **Lago Maggiore**, which is now part of the provinces of Novara and Verbania.

In its strategic position between the Po plains and Switzerland, Lago Maggiore has always been a crossroads for communications and cultural and commercial exchanges. With a central role in important historic events since the Medieval period, for over four centuries the area was dominated first by the Visconti family then by the Borromeo dynasty.

Between the end of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th century, in particular, the work of two figures such as San Carlo Borromeo and Cardinal Federico had a determining influence on local art and culture. Along with his philanthropic and pastoral work Carlo was also keenly committed to imposing the dictates of the Council of Trent. It was with a view to this that he commissioned the restoration and radical transformation of the oldest, mostly Romanesque, churches in the area. These were reworked in Baroque style. To honour the memory of his beatified ancestor, Cardinal Federico commissioned the construction of the **Sacro Monte at Arona**, and the famous "**Sancarlone**", a colossal statue over 23 metres high, which was built in 1697.

At the same time the first villas with gardens were being constructed: between 1620 and 1670 the Borromeo palaces on Isola Bella and Isola Madre were built, with magnificent Italian-style gardens which according to the canons of the era were to represent man's dominion over nature.



*Lago d'Orta*





There are some interesting sites in **Borgomanero**. The *San Bartolomeo parish church*, which has a main altar in the style of Antonio Pini, is a triumph of spiralling columns, statues and gilding. Other sites include *Villa Marazza*, the *Oratorio della Trinità* and the *Oratorio di San Giuseppe*. In **Grignasco**, the *Assunta Parish Church*, by Vittone, reworks and accentuates some classic Guarini motifs.

In the stunning area around Lago d'Orta is the **Basilica di San Giulio**, on the island of the same name. This was es-

tablished before the year 1000, but in the Baroque period the ancient Romanesque nucleus was covered over and partially replaced. In particular, at the end of the 17th century a three-nave crypt divided with marble columns was built to house the remains of a number of saints, including Giulio himself, whose body was placed in a sumptuous silver and crystal urn made in 1749.

On the mainland, right in front of the island, is another **Sacro Monte**, that of **Orta San Giulio**, dedicated to Saint Francis of Assisi. This extends up

Monte San Nicolao (now known as *Monte Francesco*), a promontory which juts out into the lake, forming the inlet of the town of Orta.

The construction of the Sacro Monte of Orta began in the late 16th century and continued for over a century, giving rise to a site featuring around 20 chapels, with 376 life-sized statues in painted terracotta and great series of frescoes depicting episodes from the life of the saint which correspond closely to the life of Christ: the scene of the *Birth of Francis*, for example, is represented as almost identical to the Nativity, and so on. Great artists came to work in Orta, like the sculptors Cristoforo Prestinari and Dionigi Bussola, of the Milan

school, the "Fratelli Righi", almost certainly a pseudonym of Giovanni and Melchiorre D'Errico, and many other talented sculptors and painters.

The episodes depicted feature a combination of grandiose scenes of great dramatic effect and intimate sketches of daily and family life, with children playing, eliciting identification and a sense of familiarity, a highly effective way of fulfilling the didactic and ex-planatory aims of the complex.

### ***How to get to Orta San Giulio:***

*Turin-Milan motorway, at Biandrate take the Autostrada dei Trafori, Borgomanero exit, then Strada statale 229 towards Gozzano-Orta.*

*Distance from Turin: around 123 km.*



*Novara: the island of Orta San Giulio*

# Verbania and the surrounding area



The Baroque sites in Verbania, which was created in 1939 from the union of the towns of Intra and Pallanza, include the interesting **historic centre of Intra**, with its narrow streets overlooked by palaces and villas of the 17th and 18th centuries, as well as the *San Fabiano church*, built in 1630, and the 18th-century *Basilica di San Vittore*, with its famous copper dome. In the surrounding area, the town of **Craveggia** in Val Vigezzo features the *Santi Giacomo e Cristoforo Parish Church*, and the small, picturesque *Piazza dei Miracoli*, which is overlooked by various buildings, dominated by the *Oratorio di Santa Marta* by Antonio Ferino, an architect who was born in the town but

worked in France for a long time.

Also in the province of Verbania is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Piedmont: **Isola Bella**, in Lago Maggiore, opposite Stresa. On the island is the grandiose Baroque complex which includes **Palazzo Borromeo**, a compact building with four storeys in the central section and three at the sides. It also has a beautiful gallery with paintings by Antonio Tempesta and Giovan Battista Tiepolo. The gardens are laid out on ten descending terraces with a total drop of 37 metres, and present some spectacular fountains, statues and water features. Inside, the palace features lavish decorations, tapestries, furniture and paintings.

Lago Maggiore: Isola Bella

Also on Lago Maggiore, in **Ghiffa**, between Verbania and Oggebbio, is the **Sacro Monte della Santissima Trinità**, a small but atmospheric complex with a shrine, three chapels and a long arcade in a vast protected natural area on Monte Cargiagio. The construction of this complex began at the end of the 16th century, adapting an older shrine which was already known as a miraculous site, and continued, with a number of interruptions, up to the mid-18th century.

The shrine features some excellent frescoes from the Lombardy school and an ornate main altar. The chapels are dedicated to episodes and figures from the Scriptures. The oldest, dedicated to the *Coronation*, was created in 1630; this was followed in 1659 by the *Chapel of St. John the Baptist*, which shows the Baptism of Christ, and lastly that dedicated to *Abraham* (1703).

In **Domodossola** there is a more complex structure, the **Sacro Monte Calvario**, which comprises a shrine, 14 chapels and an oratory. Building began in the mid-17th century and by the end of the century the shrine and most of the chapels had already been completed.

As its name suggests, the devotional and liturgical themes of the Sacro Monte Calvario regard episodes from the Way of the Cross and the Passion of Christ, but despite this the construction and decoration of the chapels does not appear to follow a single design, featuring a variety of concepts and styles. The sculptors who worked in Domodossola include Dionigi Bussola, who among other things created the chapel dedicated to the *Deposition of Christ from the Cross*, with ten statues in coloured terracotta which make up a composition of great dramatic effect.

**How to reach the area:** Turin-Milan motorway, at Biandrate take the Autostrada dei Trafori

**Isola Bella:** Carpugnino exit, then Strada statale towards Brovello-Carpugnino-Stresa.

Distance from Turin: around 137 km.

**Ghiffa:** Baveno-Stresa exit, then head towards Verbania-Ghiffa.

Distance from Turin: around 157 km.

Sacro Monte Calvario: Baveno-Stresa exit, then E62 to the Domodossola exit, then Strada Provinciale 166.

Distance from Turin: around 177 km.



# Vercelli and the surrounding area



While Vercelli, the historic part of which has conserved its Medieval character, has few traces of the Baroque period, the surrounding area presents some interesting examples.

In **Campertogno** is the *San Giacomo Parish Church*, designed by Filippo Juvarra. The political significance of this building overtook its artistic importance, and it became the symbol of a new order, namely the passage of the area from Lombard to Savoy influence in the mid-eighteenth century.

Also in the province of Vercelli is the **Sacro Monte Nuova Gerusalemme in Varallo Sesia**, the success of which led to the construction of its counterparts in the area, and heralded the advent of a

new popular religious tradition. With a different approach, and more complex than the traditional shrines, the Holy Mounts represented a more accessible and infinitely safer alternative to perilous pilgrimages to the Holy Land. They depicted the main episodes from the Scriptures and had a clear didactic purpose. Moreover, in the context of the Counter Reformation they enabled the Church to direct and control flows of pilgrims, and came to represent outposts of Catholicism, standing up to the spread of the Protestant religion.

The Varallo site is the oldest Holy Mount of all: it came into being at the end of the 15th century thanks to the work of a Franciscan monk from Milan

called Bernardino Caimi. After a stay in Jerusalem he decided to try and reproduce a “miniature Holy Land” and identified an ideal site for it on the hills above the town of Varallo Sesia.

Work began in 1486, and much was carried out during the 17th century. In all the complex features 44 chapels culminating in the *Basilica dell'Assunta*, which Benedetto Alfieri worked on, and which features a total of 142 statues of angels, patriarchs and prophets, and around 600 painted cherubs above the altar. The chapels make up a pathway/pilgrimage dedicated to the *Stories of the Mystery of Salvation*, which are illustrated with frescoes and life-sized sculptures. There is a total of around

700 statues and 4,000 painted figures representing the most sacred episodes and sites of Christianity.

Building work on the chapels ended in 1737 with the construction of the *San-t'Anna chapel* in the *Piazza dei Tribunali*, and the completion of a number of frescoes. In the same period the old church was replaced, chapels and a crypt were added to the main church, and the gallery of the main altar and Golden Gate were constructed.

## ***How to get to Varallo Sesia:***

*Turin-Milan motorway, at Biandrate take the Autostrada dei Trafori, Romagnano Sesia exit, then Strada Statale 229 towards Borgosesia-Quarona.*

*Distance from Turin: around 127 km.*

*The Holy Mount of Varallo Sesia*

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