



RESIDENCES OF THE ROYAL HOUSE OF SAVOY

"[...] I will travel from Venaria and the nearby castle of La Mandria to the residences in the centre of Turin – Palazzo Madama, Palazzo Reale, Palazzo Carignano, Villa della Regina – and from those to the palaces of the 'Crown of delights' that surround the city, Rivoli, Stupinigi and Moncalieri, then North towards the castle of Agliè, not far from Ivrea, and also South towards Racconigi, which Carlo Alberto and the princes who were his heirs loved and where they would spend holidays, and lastly Govone, the southernmost of the residences open to the public, standing on a natural balcony looking on to the Langhe and dominating the road for Asti."

La Via dei Re: viaggio a piedi tra le Residenze Sabaude, Enrico Brizzi

The itinerary described by Brizzi gives an idea of the wealth of the heritage mentioned, made up of "marvels that have left ambassadors and crowned heads open-mouthed". Between the 17th and the 19th centuries, the Savoy built and reorganized the buildings, the palaces and residences most representative for the court in Turin, in its immediate surroundings and in the Piedmontese countryside. The complex system of the Savoy Residences was conceived in such a way that it redefined the identity of the dynasty and shaped that of the city and of the region forever. UNESCO has protected this serial site, which spreads out into various areas: the buildings of the "Command Area" in the centre of Turin; the residences of the "Crown of Delights" immediately outside the urban area and the outlying residences of Racconigi, Govone, Agliè and Pollenzo.



SERIAL CULTURAL HERITAGE
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PLACE OF INSCRIPTION: NAPLES, ITALY
DATE OF INSCRIPTION: 1997



CRITERIA FOR SELECTION: The Residences of the Royal House of Savoy, in Turin and the surrounding area, represent a complete panorama of monumental European architecture of the 17th and 18th centuries, using styles, dimensions and spaces which exceptionally illustrate the prevailing doctrine of the absolute monarchy in material terms.



“In few cities are the most memorable places and monuments laid out to strike the eyes and the mind together. That vast square, which gives air to the courtyard of a huge palace. That austere and nude [...] Palazzo Madama, [...] the white curtain of the Alps which closes off Via Dora Grossa, the green curtain of the hills that closes off Via di Po, [...] give a singular appearance to that part of Turin [...].”

As described in the picture painted by Edmondo De Amicis in *Torino 1880*, the architectonic treasures of the Savoy family in the city are very close to one another. The buildings in the “Command Area” (the seat of the administrative bodies of the Savoy kingdom), including Palazzo Madama and Palazzo Carignano, the Villa della Regina and the Castle of Valentino are the “city” residences; they show the grandiose face of Turin in the great project of transformation which aimed to make it a European capital worthy of the renewed power of the royal dynasty.

The first approach with the city’s history is in Piazza Castello, overlooked by the **1 Royal Palace** (which, with the Royal Gardens, the **2 Armoury** and the **3 Royal Library**, the Museum of Antiquities, the Savoy Gallery and **4 Palazzo Chiavese** forms the complex of the Royal Museums), **5 Palazzo Madama**, **6 Palazzo della Prefettura** (the former Royal Secretariats of State), the **7 Royal Theatre** (its original facade is part of the protected site) and the **8 State Archives** (the former Court Archives). Via Verdi starts from the square and here there are the remains of the **9 Royal Academy** (former military

academy), the **10 Royal Mint**, which today is the Police Headquarters, and the cobbled courtyard of the **11 Cavallerizza Reale**, the old stables of the Savoys. Crossing Via Po, the important main road that arrives in Piazza Vittorio Veneto from Piazza Castello, you leave the “Command Area” and reach Piazza Carignano, which is the splendid setting for **12 Palazzo Carignano**, where Carlo Alberto and Vittorio Emanuele II were born and which in 1861 became the seat of the Chamber of Deputies of the first Italian Parliament. Admire the undulating movement of the façade, the 17th century work of Guarino

Guarini, then you reach **13 Villa della Regina**, on the other side of the river, *lieux de loisirs* of the Savoy household close to the city centre, for which it acts as a backdrop where the plain gives way to the greenery of the hills. Lastly, in the district of San Salvario, nestled in the large Turin park which follows the course of the River Po, stands the **14 Castle of Valentino**, a splendid 16th century villa on the river of Emanuele Filiberto and the residence of Christine of France, who in the 17th century commissioned the architects Carlo and Amedeo di Castellamonte to expand it following the French taste.



THE HOUSE OF THE CENTURIES

“The house of the centuries is Palazzo Madama. No building contains such a sum of time, history and poetry in its great decrepitude. [...] Palazzo Madama is like a summary in stone of the whole of Turin’s past, from the times of the origins [...] to the days of our Risorgimento.”

La casa dei secoli, Guido Gozzano

If Piazza Castello and its surroundings house the greatest number of government buildings of the Savoy family, Palazzo Madama, at the centre of the square, is the visual story of the history of Turin. The eastern gate of access to the Roman Augusta Taurinorum, a fortified castle in the Middle Ages, the residence of the Princes of Acaja and then of the “Madama Reale”, Christine of France, from 1600, the seat of the first

sub-alpine Senate in 1848 and a place for art and culture today, it dominates the scene with its splendid baroque façade in white stone and the sumptuous main double staircase, the only parts of the original project that Filippo Juvarra was actually able to complete. This richness was seized upon by writers and intellectuals like the Turin-born Gozzano, who in his poem *Torino* associates this precise point of the city with its deepest identity: “From Palazzo Madama to the Valentino / the Alps burn amid the blazing clouds... / This is the old time of Turin/ this is the real time of Turin”. Charles de Brosses, a French magistrate, philosopher, linguist and politician, wrote in the 18th century: “Palazzo Madama has a wonderful facade, far superior to that of the royal palace. [...] Inside there is one of the most beautiful staircases in the world, it is double, with a fine line. The vault supporting it is aerial and has a perfect design”.



“More or less around this time a magnificent reception was given for King Vittorio Amedeo and the royal family by Prince Luigi di Carignano, in his castle of Racconigi [...]. There were balls, hunting expeditions, fireworks and the most splendid entertainment was lavished on the noble guests.”

To become a real European capital, Turin underwent one of its first major restyling projects in 1563 when it replaced Chambéry. As well as the “Command Area” in the city, the best architects worked on designing palaces outside the city in the 17th and 18th centuries, for leisure, receptions and the affairs of state of dukes and sovereigns, enriched with luxurious furnishings, elegant parks and gardens and then the residences of Racconigi, Govone, Agliè and Pollenzo.

From the southern hills of Turin, we go to those of Moncalieri. Its **1 Castle**, designed in 1680 by Amedeo di Castellamonte and commissioned by Carlo Emanuele I, was the royal residence from the second half of the 15th century to the 1920s. Proceeding westwards, the **2 Hunting Lodge of Stupinigi** awaits you: the sight of the white residence (commissioned by Vittorio Amedeo II to Filippo Juvarra in 1729) which suddenly appears at the end of the drive, with a stag at the top of the dome, is breathtaking. Going north-west, you then arrive at the **3 Castle of Rivoli**, a Savoy residence from 1247, enlarged in the 17th century by the Castellamontes and later by Juvarra, who did not complete his project. Restored to a new

life in the 20th century, today it is an important **Museum of Contemporary Art**. North of the city, there is the **4 Reggia di Venaria**. Built by Amedeo di Castellamonte in 1659 as a hunting lodge for Carlo Emanuele II together with the La Mandria Park, it was enlarged by Michelangelo Garove in the early 18th century and then by Juvarra. It became state property in 1932 and was restored to its ancient splendour almost 59 years later, thanks to long and detailed work. In La Mandria, you can visit the Royal Apartments of the **5 Castle of La Mandria**, built between 1708 and 1861. Further north, you can get lost in the over 300 rooms of the residence of Carlo Felice and Maria Cristina di Borbone in the **6 Ducal Castle of Agliè**, built in the 12th century

and which passed into the hands of the Savoys in 1764. Afterwards, you can cool off in the park. Heading south of Turin, you reach the **7 Castle of Racconigi** (mentioned by Dumas): rebuilt by Guarini in the 17th century, it was where the Savoys spent their holidays for much of the 19th century and until the fall of the monarchy. In the heart of the Roero, the **8 Castle of Pollenzo** was built by Carlo Alberto in the middle of the 19th century, reworking a pre-existing castle. Half an hour away by car, on the hill which dominates the village of **Govone**, there is the **9 Royal Castle**, rebuilt by the Counts of Solaro on the design of Guarino Guarini at the end of the 17th century, completed by Benedetto Alfieri a century later and finally bought by the Savoys in 1792.



RESIDENCES YESTERDAY, MUSEUMS TODAY

“A passionate lover of the arts and mainly of painting, Carlo Alberto [...] wanted Turin to possess a collection of paintings that one day could rival with those of the other large cities of Italy; so he gave all his paintings to the nation [...], he added a very fine collection of medals, founded the rich gallery of Palazzo Madama, the museum of weapons and the royal library.”

La Maison de Savoie, Alexandre Dumas

The passion of the Savoy family for art and culture is ancient history: it is a passion that the city has inherited and translated

into excellent results, transforming the royal residences into museums and places of culture, after the end of their historical function. Take, for example the Castle of Rivoli: after centuries of various events, thanks to a brilliant project that successfully combined new facilities, original parts and sections that had been in a state of abandon, it has ultimately housed a museum of contemporary art since 1984. The Palace of Venaria Reale, plundered and pillaged during Napoleonic times, then a barracks until after the Second World War, underwent a colossal conservative restoration which has brought it back to its ancient splendour. The Royal Museums, with the ancient art in the Museum of Antiquities and the masterpieces of the Savoy Gallery, the great exhibitions that follow on in rotation at the Palazzo Chiablese and Palazzo Madama, confirm the excellence of the work of restoration and the intelligent use of a unique architectonic heritage.



'THE LONG ENTRANCE DRIVE SEEMED AN ENDLESS TELESCOPE WHICH FIXES THE EYES DIRECTLY ON TO THE CENTRAL BODY OF THE BUILDING, EASILY IDENTIFIED BY THE STATUE OF A DEER ON TOP OF THE DOME. FOR THE WHOLE STRETCH OF THE ROAD, ON THE RIGHT AND ON THE LEFT, THERE WERE THE FARMHOUSES THAT WERE PART OF THE RESIDENCE: ALL THE COUNTRY SEATS

HAD TO BE SELF-SUFFICIENT AND THEREFORE FOR EACH ONE THERE WERE FARMING AND BREEDING ACTIVITIES SO THAT THERE WAS NO NEED TO TOUCH THE STATE COFFERS TO MAINTAIN THEM!'

As well as surprising adults, the sight of the **1 Hunting Lodge of Stupinigi**, described in the illustrated book for children *Anna e il segreto musicale di Stupinigi* by Giulia Piovano, is also exciting for children. You can set off on your journey through the Savoy

Residences from the large deer on the roof, visiting the apartments of the king and queen and wandering through the courtyard of honour, the park and the gardens in admiration of everything. This is followed by the **2 Palace of Venaria Reale**, probably one of the most precious historic and artistic treasures not only of the region but of the whole of Italy, which will leave you open-mouthed, starting from the incredible Grand Gallery, via the Citroniera and the Great Stables and ending up in the magnificent gardens. The immense **3 La Mandria Park** starts from the palace, which together with its castle will be the perfect scenery for exciting adventures, worthy of a king or a princess. Moving on to the **4 Castle of Rivoli**, you can take part in an event for families organised by the museum of contemporary art, having fun as well as discovering what is left of the original building and what, on the other hand, has been rebuilt. When you arrive in the city, take part in one of the activities for children at the **5 Royal Palace**. Then go up to the **6 Villa della Regina**, to have a look at the delightful residence and the vineyard that still produces excellent wine, before continuing with a lovely walk in the nature of the **7 Park of Villa Genero**, slightly higher up on the hill. Or go down again, cross the Po and reach the **8 Park of Valentino**, which offers leisure and fun in the greenery, in the elegant presence of the **9 Castle of Valentino**. Watch the boats and the canoes glide over the river, have a picnic on the lawn and say goodbye to the city at the **10 Medieval Village and Fortress**, very faithful 19th-century replicas appreciated by budding historians.



THE RESIDENCES OF THE SAVOY FAMILY in books

Reading suggestions to get to know the palaces and villas of the Savoy family.

- **Voyages**, Charles-Louis de Montesquieu (1730). The writer describes the expanded areas of the Savoy capital between the second half of the 17th and the first decades of the 18th century.
- **Lettres familières écrites d'Italie**, Charles de Brosses (1739-40; published posthumously in 1858). The French magistrate and historian described his admiration for the streets, squares and buildings of Turin.
- **The Confessions**, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1782-89). Turin, the Savoy court and palaces also appear in the autobiography-masterpiece of the French philosopher.
- **Life**, Vittorio Alfieri (1806). His adolescence in Turin and the descriptions of the city and its architecture.
- **La Maison de Savoie**, Alexandre Dumas (1852-56). Cycle of novels published by the Turin-based editors Perrin.
- **Torino 1880**, Edmondo de Amicis (1880). A masterly portrait of the city which seizes its epochal, but at the same time eternal, image.
- **Letters of Insanity**, Friedrich Nietzsche (1888-89). The philosopher lived, wrote and went mad in the shadow of Palazzo Carignano.
- **Le tre capitali**, Edmondo De Amicis (1898). A gloomy and deep essay on the evolution of Turin, Florence and Rome in Italian history.
- **La via del rifugio** (1907) and **The Colloquies** (1911), Guido Gozzano. Turin is often the object of nostalgic memories and the elegant irony of the Turin-born poet.
- **La casa dei secoli**, a short story published in the magazine *Donna* (1914), then in *L'altare del passato* (1918), Guido Gozzano. A historical and sentimental description of Palazzo Madama.
- **Nell'ombra e nella luce**, Giancarlo de Cataldo (2014). Turin and its historic buildings are the backdrop to this novel set in the reign of Carlo Alberto.

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• **La Via dei Re: viaggio a piedi tra le Residenze Sabaude**, Enrico Brizzi (2018). On foot to discover the residences of the Savoy family, in an itinerary of 300 kilometres which is also an unmissable journey in time.

• **Le Residenze Sabaude**, edited by Costanza Roggero, Mario Turetta, Alberto Vanelli (2018). The palaces, the estates, the castles, the villas and the charterhouses of the Savoy family in Turin and in Piedmont.

Children's books:

• **Le Residenze Sabaude. Diario illustrato per un viaggio nel tempo**, written by Michele Ferraro and Luca Piovani, drawings by Francesco Corni (2023). It is not a book for children, but the splendid illustrations will fascinate children and adults alike.

• **Anna e il segreto musicale di Stupinigi**, Giulia Piovano, illustrated by Valeria Pavese (2014). Three friends have an unforgettable adventure in the Hunting Lodge of Stupinigi.

• **Attraverso gli specchi di Palazzo Reale**, Giulia Piovano, illustrated by Valeria Pavese (2015). Discovering a marvellous building full of surprises in the company of little Anna.