



## Great Palaces of Italy

A selective Grand Tour from Turin to Naples

5–14 November 2025 (ML 841)

10 days • £4,990

Speaker: Dr Luca Leoncini

A curated collection of historic palaces and royal residences throughout Italy.

Led by Luca Leoncini, director of collections at the Palazzo Reale, Genoa.

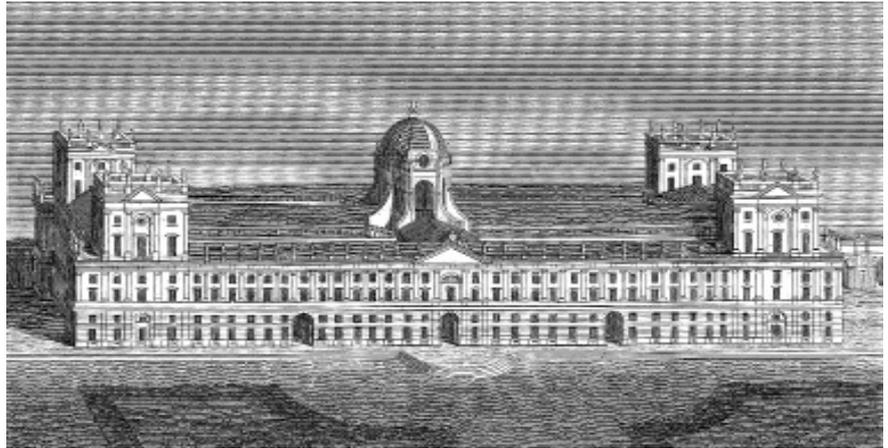
Art, architecture and the aristocracy, between the 15th and 18th centuries.

A full day excursion to the palace and park in Caserta, with lunch in a private palace.

For much of the 17th and 18th centuries, Italy was the ultimate destination of the Grand Tour, a rite of passage in the education of young men and women of the upper echelons. For these fortunate travellers time was no object and months could be spent in pursuit of aesthetic discovery. They travelled beyond the obvious cultural centres to the great power houses that dominated the regions before the Risorgimento.

Such luxury of time is afforded to few. This tour presents something of a Grand Tour in miniature: a carefully curated digest of some of the finest stately homes in Italy, from north to south, where we can observe up close the art collections, architecture, and aristocratic history between the 15th and 18th centuries. Their glorious gardens, too, both intimate and enormous, form an integral element of the schemes designed to reflect the status of their inhabitants. Alongside palace architecture and landscape, we will celebrate the remarkable collections of paintings, sculptures and furniture that enrich their interiors.

The Reggia di Venaria, close to Turin, is an unexpected colossus that was carefully restored to its original splendour between 1996 and 2007. The Patrician Palaces of Genoa were built during the city's 17th-century golden age, when the old Maritime Republic was one of the most important financial epicentres of Europe. In Lucca, the aristocratic residences nestle pleasingly in the verdant northern Tuscan landscape; just outside Florence, the Medici villa in Poggio a Caiano, was commissioned by Lorenzo il Magnifico in 1480, and is a highlight. We end our journey with the Reggia di Caserta, one of the largest palaces in Europe, set in extensive park and gardens. No historic Grand Tourist would have missed it – and neither should you.



Naples, Caserta Palace

### Itinerary

**Day 1.** Fly at c. 9.15am from London Heathrow to Milan Malpensa (British Airways). Drive from Milan to Turin via the Reggia di Venaria Reale, a royal residence of the house of Savoy with Baroque interiors and extensive gardens. First of two nights in Turin.

**Day 2: Turin.** In the morning visit the Royal Palace, built in 1660, with wonderful interiors from the 17th–19th centuries. This is followed by a visit to Palazzo Madama in the centre of Piazza Castello, now housing the City Art Museum.

**Day 3: Cherasco, Genoa.** Drive to Castello di Racconigi, another Savoy palace and UNESCO world heritage site. Stop in Cherasco, which has a 14th-century Visconti castle, for a typical Piedmontese lunch. Drive onwards to Genoa, taking a scenic route through beautiful countryside. First of two nights in Genoa.

**Day 4: Genoa.** Visit the Villa del Principe which houses Perin del Vaga frescoes. Spend the afternoon at the Palazzo Reale, which has a magnificent stairway, splendidly furnished rooms and a fine collection of pictures. Final night in Genoa.

**Day 5: Santa Margherita Ligure, Lucca.** The 17th-century Villa Durazzo at Santa Margherita Ligure is a typical suburban residence of the Genoese nobility. It has well preserved interiors, a lovely small *giardino all'italiana* and fine views. Return by foot through the town along the Passeggiata Lungomare and down a hill on the other side

of the bay. Break here for lunch enjoying a splendid view of the bay. Continue by coach to Lucca for the first of three nights.

**Day 6: Florence.** Drive to Florence to the redoubtable Palazzo Pitti, which houses several museums including the Galleria Palatina, outstanding particularly for High Renaissance and Baroque paintings. Explore the extensive Boboli Gardens, their sculptures and pavilions, including an 18th-century ballroom overlooking olive groves. Continue to the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi which has exquisite frescoes by Benozzo Gozzoli. Return to Lucca.

**Day 7: Lucca.** Visit the Palazzo Pfanner, Baroque palace built in the mid-17th century by the Moriconi Family. The afternoon is free.

**Day 8: Poggio a Caiano, Florence.** Visit Poggio a Caiano, the country retreat of Lorenzo il Magnifico, and a highly important monument in the history of grand country houses. In the afternoon travel by train to Naples (business class), a journey of less than three hours. Stay two nights in Naples.

**Day 9: Caserta.** Situated a few miles outside Naples, the royal palace at Caserta, begun in 1751, is Italy's most magnificent and accomplished emulation of Versailles. An awesome absolutist statement, set within parkland and gardens equally magnificent in scale, the apartments are superbly decorated and furnished. Lunch is at a private palace.

**Day 10.** There is some free time and a visit to The Castel Nuovo, also known as 'Maschio Angioino', a medieval castle located on the

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continued

waterfront in Piazza Municipio. Fly from Naples to London Heathrow, arriving at c. 9.15pm.

## Lecturer

**Luca Leoncini.** Art historian specialising in 15th-century Italian painting. His first degree and PhD were from Rome University, followed by research at the Warburg Institute in London. He has published articles on the classical tradition in Italian art of the 15th century and contributed to the Macmillan Dictionary of Art. He has also written on Mantegna and Renaissance drawings.

## Practicalities

**Price. Two sharing:** £4,990 or £4,840 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £5,790 or £5,640 without flights.

**Included:** flights (Euro Traveller) with British Airways (Airbus 320); travel by private coach; travel by rail (business class); hotel accommodation; breakfasts; 3 lunches and 5 dinners with wine; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer and the tour manager.

**Accommodation. Grand Hotel Sitea, Turin** ([grandhotelsitea.com](http://grandhotelsitea.com)): 4-star hotel, comfortable, elegantly furnished and very central. **Grand Hotel Savoia, Genoa** ([grandhotelsavoia.genova.it](http://grandhotelsavoia.genova.it)): 5-star hotel close to the Palazzo Reale. **Hotel Ilaria, Lucca** ([hotelilaria.com](http://hotelilaria.com)): an excellently situated 4-star within the city walls, with friendly staff. **Grand Hotel Parkers, Naples** ([grandhotelparkers.it](http://grandhotelparkers.it)): a 5-star hillside hotel in a quieter area of the city, with spectacular views over the bay of Naples, Mount Vesuvius and the island of Capri. Rooms are all of a good size.

*Single occupancy rooms are doubles for sole use.*

**How strenuous?** There is quite a lot of walking, much of it on roughly paved streets. A good level of fitness is essential. You will be on your feet for lengthy stretches of time. Participants also need to be able to lift their own luggage onto and off trains. Some days involve a lot of driving – average distance by coach per day: 48 miles.

**Group size:** between 10 and 22 participants.