

Four-monthly Art magazine of the Italian Historic Houses Association

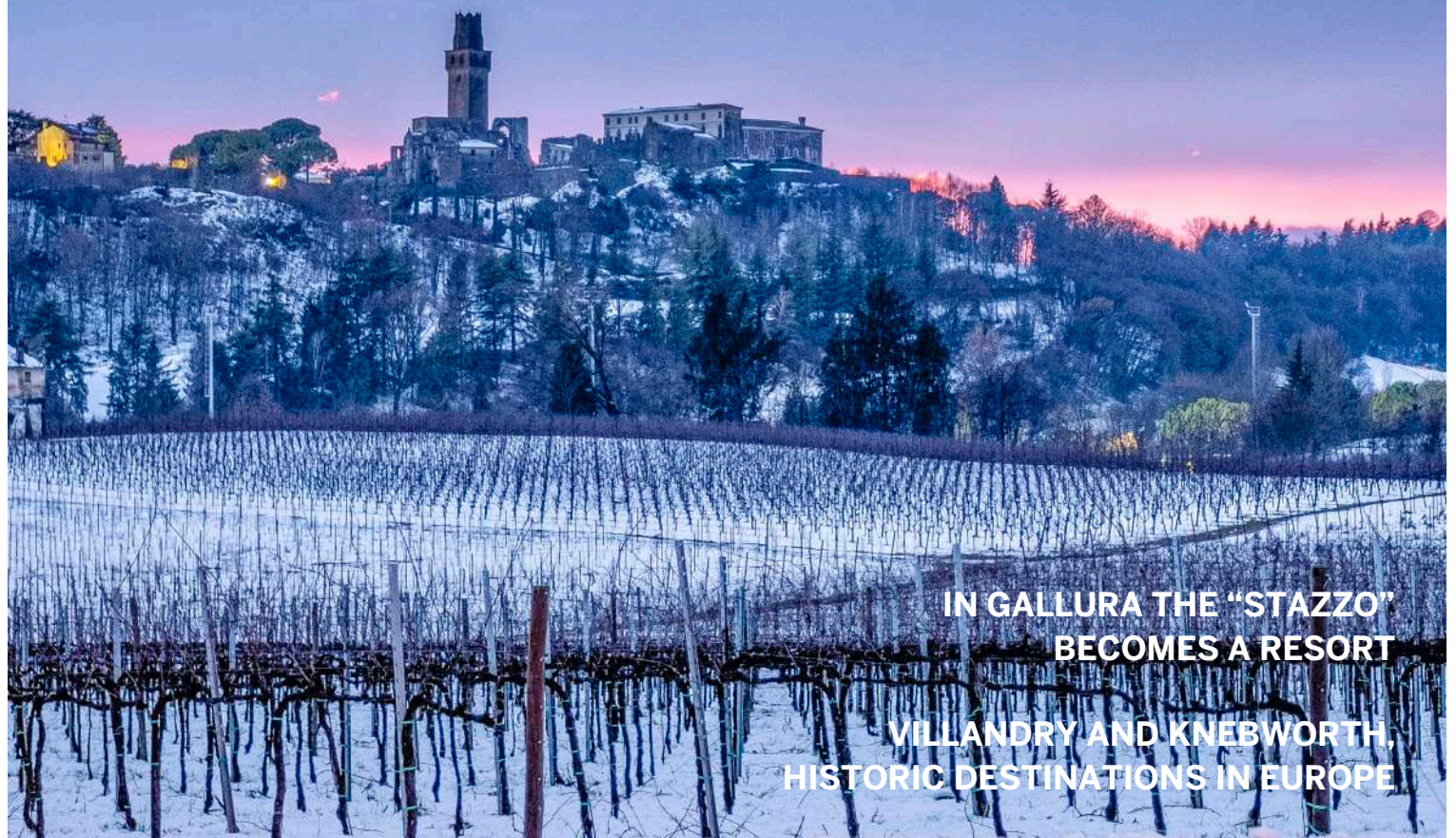
ADSI
Associazione Dimore Storiche Italiane

le DIMORE STORICHE

Issue 3 - Year 2023

JOURNEYING THROUGH THE ALPS

Après ski at the castle,
Day-visits or overnights



**IN GALLURA THE "STAZZO"
BECOMES A RESORT**

**VILLANDRY AND KNEBWORTH,
HISTORIC DESTINATIONS IN EUROPE**

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ON COVER
Castello San Salvatore in Susegana
photo by Antonio Zardetto



Archives at the Castello di Sannazzaro

Paper histories that defy the ages

Scripta manent, said the Latins. *Scripta manent atque volant*, we contemporaries add, and in this case the *volant* is not linked to the impermanence of words but rather to the flight of the documentary heritage at the disposal of Italy’s historic houses. Archives and libraries of immense value, carefully guarded by families who retell through those pages the history of entire territories and communities—a history, moreover, different from the official version preserved in public archives—become places to visit, potential destinations for a cultured form of tourism characterised by the desire to deepen the sense of an experience accompanied by the unmistakable scent of ancient papers that pervades the rooms used for safekeeping. These fragile documents have miraculously escaped the flames that have always represented the main threat to the integrity of the memory to be handed down to posterity—in dwellings where a burning fire was a constant presence for the purpose of lighting and heating. Today the same documents must face climate change, the consequences of which have hit Emilia Romagna in particular this year. Defying the centuries, paper histories reveal to us who we are and where we come from. They illustrate the evolution of society, of territories, and of buildings either monumental or less grand: the very stratification that makes Italy a unique and irreproducible nation. From the desire to share this heritage comes a special day, a special event, *Carte in Dimora*, Papers in the House, held now for the second

time, organised by ADSI with the patronage of the MIC—Ministry of Culture. Private archives and libraries provide tangible evidence of the evolution of places and of the way historic dwellings are a fundamental and indispensable element of our country’s cultural heritage, thanks to their capillary and constant presence in every city, town and village in Italy. Such resources not only keep history alive but also they can and must serve as linchpins for the sustainable development of the territories they represent. For a future—as Giovanna Giubbini, Superintendent and supporter of this initiative, points out in this issue of our magazine—that must be further protected, using the potential offered by technology. Digital copying is the life insurance of documents, but not only that. By facilitating access to documents, digitisation could also become the source of inspiration for new stories, written and “filmed” in the form of video or augmented reality so as to reach new generations sensitive to the fascinating history of villas and palaces that are sure to become legendary, if only we find a way to communicate their stories by generating emotions. This is one of the tasks incumbent on the new generations of custodians of Historic Houses, to whom I suggest they read the article dedicated to a gentleman, a certain Joachim Carvallo, who more than a century ago decided to do what no one had dared to do before: open his house, make it a place to visit. Today, his house, the Château of Villandry, receives 360,000 visitors each year and is one of the most visited destinations in France. Enjoy the pages ahead.

**LUCA BONACINI**

Luca writes about travel, food and wine, literature and cinema for *QN*, *Il Resto del Carlino*, *La Nazione*, *Il Giorno*, *James Magazine*, *Gambero Rosso*, *LivEIn*, *Adv*. In 2021 he received the Friend of the Women of Wine Award and in 2022 the Gianni Fossati Award from the Italian Academy of Cuisine.

**ANDREA GUOLO**

An economics journalist, Andrea ranges from food to fashion, from design to spirits, telling the story of all that is Made in Italy. He writes for *Vogue Italia*, *Milano Finanza*, *Gambero Rosso* and many other Italian and foreign publications. He is a theatre author, essayist, ever driven by a passion for new projects.

**SILVIA MANZONI**

Born in Venice, Silvia graduated in Literature at Ca' Foscari and then worked in the Venetian editorial office of *Il Gazzettino*. Later she moved to Paris, where she works as a freelance journalist for newspapers such as *D of La Repubblica*, *MFF* and *Marie Claire*, writing on fashion, beauty (with a particular focus on perfume-related topics), travel and art.

**FULVIA CAMISA**

A native of Parma, yet Milanese thanks to the city where she lives. In a previous life, Fulvia participated in the women's Giro d'Italia. Now she pedals to keep fit and to see the world from a different point of view. She writes about lifestyles and is always on the lookout for places (even just around the corner) that have stories to tell.

**LA SIGNORA IN DOLCE**

A pastry detective brought to life by actress Tiziana Di Masi. Wrapped in a fuchsia trench coat, wearing a magic magnifying glass for her investigative missions, La Signora in Dolce travels in search of the perfect cake. Author of the book *"La Signorina in Dolce"* (Buk Buk Editore)

**GIAMBATTISTA MARCHETTO**

A freelance journalist and blogger in the fields of economics, food and wine, tourism, art and culture, Giambattista collaborates with *Il Sole 24Ore*, *Il Gazzettino*, *Pambianco*, *Food & Wine Italia*, *Winenews*, *Italia a Tavola*, *Paneacquaaculture*. He directs *VinoNews24* and supports the editorial staff of *ItalianWineTour*.

**CAMILLA ROCCA**

Camilla collaborates with *La Repubblica*, *Vanity Fair*, *Io Donna*, *Elle*, *Capital*, *Food & Travel*. Specialising in travel, hotels, food & wine, she now heads a vertical team in these four-account sectors. Her secret? Always on the lookout for enticing news to share.

**CRISTINA CIMATO**

Born and raised in Milan, Cristina proudly defends her Calabrian origins. A journalist since her university days, she covers design, art, food and tourism. She loves writing, reading, travelling and drinking good wine. Her dreams include studying the cello and writing a novel.

**ELEONORA LOPES**

A free-lance oenogastronomic journalist, Eleonora handles communications for various leaders in the Food & Wine sector. A sommelier and woman of wine, she lives in Pescara, writing about her Abruzzo in the magazine *Abruzzo Impresa* and covering the enterprises she discovers on her travels in *Italia a Tavola*.

**GABRIELE PRINCIPATO**

A journalist for *Corriere della Sera*, Gabriele covers food, wine and spirits for *Cook*. A lecturer and coordinator of the master's degree in Philosophy of Food and Wine at the Vita-Salute San Raffaele University of Milan, he is also a lecturer at the University of Perugia in Contemporary History and Geopolitics.

SOS HERITAGE, A EUROPEAN NETWORK TO PROTECT CULTURAL HERITAGE

Italy, Austria, Romania and Serbia have launched a systems project to safeguard cultural heritage related to historic houses. Entitled SOS Heritage, its main objective is to establish a series of good practices for the management and optimisation of cultural heritage while at the same time developing innovative methodologies for risk analysis to support the sector's ability to cope with challenges arising from climate change. SOS Heritage is co-funded by the European Commission through the Creative Europe Programme (agreement number: 101055573). There are three areas of operation. The first is to implement small pilot projects oriented towards the digitisation and promotion of cultural heritage in Italy, Serbia and Romania, and to produce a manual of good practices for the optimisation of historical heritage (a manual already prepared and downloadable). The second is to develop and test a web application designed to help professionals manage risk assessment procedures and produce risk management plans in an immediate and digital way (the app is already available). The third is to develop and test a training course on "Cultural Heritage Risk Management" for owners, managers and professionals. This is being conducted by a consortium of 5 partners in Italy, Austria, Romania and Serbia. Besides ADSI, whose focus in the project is the protection and enhancement of private archives, the working group includes the **Mazzini Lab Benefit** company for Italy, the innovative project leader whose main business activity is the realisation of risk analysis and risk management plans for museums, archives and libraries. Completing this consortium are the University of **Donau Krems**, a leading institution in teaching risk management for cultural heritage; the **Transylvania Trust Foundation**, whose objective is to protect the historical castles of the homonymous Romanian region; and the **National Museum of Kruševac**, which collects,



preserves, protects and exhibits movable cultural property and evidence of the nation's material culture. "The project," says **Massimo Cruciotti**, founder and general manager of Mazzini Lab, "started in July 2022 and will end in June 2024. We are therefore more than halfway through, and a substantial part of the results have already been achieved or are being tested, as in the case of the app. We are now finalising the online course in which all partners are participating, intended for those who work in the field of culture and want to learn

more about risk management." By June 2024, the online course is scheduled to conclude and the three pilot projects will finish. At that point, each partner will share the results among the countries involved. Mazzini Lab is a benefit company with offices in Rome, Milan and Bolzano. It holds training and consultancy courses to increase awareness of actions for the protection and enhancement of Cultural Heritage with practical exercises and demonstrations on aspects of prevention, protection and intervention in emergency situations.



An impregnable fortress in the Euganean Hills

by Luca Bonacini

Visiting Monselice Castle means diving into history. It is as though the resident nobles and servants have stepped out for a moment, letting us glimpse their lives in this building from the year 1000

A short distance from Padua stands a structure of extraordinary beauty, immersed in the green Euganean Hills—the perfect location to rediscover the history of the area. The Castello di Monselice is a rare example of a fully furnished architectural complex to be explored on a journey through time, thanks to the sensitive artistic acumen of Count Vittorio Cini, who acquired the rich collection of art objects that furnish and adorn the rooms of the Castle. Starting from the oldest part dating back to the 11th century, four nuclei and several sections from different eras make this a place of remarkable historical and architectural value, rich in secrets, legends and historic episodes. The monumental Rocca di Monselice complex, which includes, in addition to the castle, Villa Duodo, an architectural jewel by Vincenzo Scamozzi, and at the top of the hill the imposing Mastio Federiciano, is managed by Veneto Edifici

Monumentali, a single-member association of the Veneto Region, whose sole administrator, lawyer Aldo Rozzi Marin, was recently reappointed. Building of the keep began in 1239 at the behest of Emperor Frederick II by his feudal ally Ezzelino III da Romano. The military construction involved the demolition of the ancient Pieve di Santa Giustina (10th century) and the reuse of the religious buildings. The result was an impregnable fortress. A truncated pyramid-shaped base supports the inhabited section with a height of approx. 20 metres, originally surmounted by a wooden structure, no longer present. The keep is still protected today by fortifications, the oldest parts of which date back to the 6th century, encompassing no less than five rings of walls. Returning to the Castle, its interior holds “Petrarch’s Study,” commissioned by Barbantini as a tribute to the poet. There is

a small chamber called “Jacopino’s Room” dominated by the third Carrara walkway of the Castle where, according to tradition, Jacopino da Carrara, the unfortunate prince who ruled Padua in 1350, was imprisoned. Legend has it that his ghost still lives in the castle, together with Avalda, the unfaithful wife of the nobleman Azzo VII d’Este. Literature over several epochs has taken note of this evocative Castello, and there are traces of writers and poets who described it after sojourning here, starting with Rolandino, who wrote about it before the advent of the Carraresi. In all probability, Francesco Petrarca paid a visit here, for he was a protégé of Francesco II Vecchio da Carrara and a canon at Santa Giustina. The Venetian historian Marin Sanudo, in his famous journey through the Veneto lands in 1483, provided the first descriptions of the walls of Monselice and he was certainly able to admire the castle as well. The beauty of this ancient mansion takes your breath away. In addition to the monumental “tower-shaped chimneys” from the 14th century, unique in Italy in terms of their form and functionality, visitors may enjoy delightful views and historically significant features such as the armoury, an assemblage of particular importance, since



it is the second most well-stocked collection in the Veneto region, containing no less than 904 original pieces from the 13th to the 19th century. Other special features of this monumental complex are the layout of the rooms and spaces as well as the atmosphere that Cini has managed to recreate. This is a destination for lovers of history, architecture and beauty. Naturally, it requires special care and poses a series of challenges to those entrusted with its protection. Vulnerability to the wear and tear of time demands constant, scrupulous attention, including provisions for maintenance work affected by the difficulties of

finding financial resources and the need for informed input from the pertinent authorities in order to guarantee proper conservation. Visitors are sure to enjoy an exceptional experience immersed in history and beauty, finding themselves catapulted into an ancient environment where it feels as though soldiers, nobles and servants have just stepped out for a moment, allowing us to “peek” into their lives. Guided tours are adapted to suit different types of visitors. In the case of kindergarten classes, for example, the visit focuses on a fairy tale to entertain younger children. What is more, tours can be customised to meet the interests of the participants. Every year, the monumental complex hosts cultural, musical, public and private events, and re-enactments such as the medieval appointment each September, when “Viviamo il Castello” (Let’s experience the castle) is organised in collaboration with the Associazione Giostra della Rocca di Monselice.

Rocca di Monselice Monumental Complex

Via Del Santuario, 11 – 35043
Monselice (Padova)
<http://www.castellodimonselice.it/>



In the photos: the monumental complex that includes, in addition to the Castle, the Villa Duodo and the Mastio Federiciano. The entire complex is managed by Veneto Edifici Monumentali. Credits, Turcato

Opening photo: the Castello di Monselice Credit, Ziliotto

“CARTE IN DIMORA” —THE FUTURE HAS ALREADY BEGUN

More than one-hundred historic houses joined the second open day for family archives and libraries. The challenge now is to digitise and protect this heritage

by **FULVIA CAMISA**

The past has symbolically opened its doors to the future, thanks to “*Carte in dimora*”—“Papers in the House”—the event on 7 October that welcomed the public to view the archives and libraries of over one-hundred historic houses. A unique and extraordinary opportunity to enter palaces, villas, farms, castles and fortresses holding documents and books of great value.

“These are the papers preserved in family archives and libraries, very often deemed by the Ministry of Culture to be of special cultural interest. Just as you provide for the protection of a palace or a fresco, you provide for the protection of libraries and historical archives,” explains **Giovanna Giubbini**, superintendent of archives and libraries in Umbria and, in the interim, also in Lazio, who for years has worked with ADSI, the Italian Historic Houses Association. Numbers in hand, the event recorded 2,600 visitors in 111 Historic Houses. “Many owners opened their libraries and archives, usually reserved for scholars upon request. It is an opportunity for popularisation. And, above all, an opportunity to learn how to ‘mediate’ because if there is no mediator, someone who conveys information and makes people appreciate documents and old books, most people do not even know what they have in front of them. Maybe they have before them autographs of illustrious figures and papers that are important for the territory and the community.”

In essence, the aim is to make known assets that are part of the socio-economic and cultural heritage of our country. “Noble families and large landowners kept their own land registers, which were watercoloured. There are words that are still in use today, despite the many transformations that have taken place in the area. Waterways, bridges and place names have a long persistence over time.” A valuable source of information on the history of the places one visits and their evolution, with the enchantment one feels when experiencing memorable moments. “Many of these houses had archive and library rooms, and often the documents are preserved together with the furnishings. So there is also a feeling of the special place one is in, inside private homes that are rarely open for visits.”




Con il Patrocinio di
MINISTERO DELLA CULTURA

ADSI
 Associazione Dimore Storiche Italiane

CARTE IN DIMORA

Archivi e Biblioteche:
 storie tra passato e futuro

7 OTTOBRE 2023
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www.associazionedimorestoricheitaliane.it/carte-in-dimora-2023/



“*Carte in dimora*” was joined on 8 October by “*Domenica in carta*”—“Sunday on Paper”, an initiative promoted by the Ministry of Culture through the opening of public libraries and state archives. “The treasures preserved in public archives and libraries were exhibited with targeted events to make the most important objects known—not necessarily the oldest but those that arouse interest. We say it is a social action, because archives are not widely known.”

To preserve the past, one must invest in technology. To counter the wear and tear of time, the key word is digitisation. “Memory of the 1900s is very fragile. The parchments that have been preserved have resisted for centuries. Ancient papers have come down to us and they are still very legible, while more recent papers and prints are more prone to destruction. Digitisation means preservation. Techniques are being refined to preserve digital copies in the long term, and those copies are periodically saved in other formats.” The future has already begun.

From top, poster for *Carte in Dimora* 2023 and Casa Sciascia in Racalmuto (Agrigento)

Opposite, the Tor Tre Ponti monumental complex in Latina and the Castello di Lurano (Bergamo)
 Courtesy: associazionedimorestoricheitaliane.it



Archives kept by Fondazione Fashion Research Italy in Bologna
Courtesy Fri

IN ITALY, WANDERING THROUGH ARCHIVES

A distinctive kind of tourism is to be found in discovering idiosyncratic collections of papers and archives of other sorts. From the documentation of Castello Sannazzaro in Piedmont to the fashion designs of the Fri Foundation in Bologna, the Poli company's grappa collection in Veneto and even anchors from the tuna-slaughter in Favignana

by CAMILLA ROCCA

There are traditional archives based on ancient documents, and then there are more curious and original archives that grow out of years of research. One common characteristic of these very different collections is the cult of the past, but not only that. On the part of the people who have spent their lives finding and preserving artefacts, there is also the desire to share them, trusting in the interest of visitors in hopes of triggering in others the same passion that motivates the documentary or physical archivist. Here are some examples. Among Italy's historic residences, we find one of the most important family archives in terms of historical continuity and longevity. This is the archive kept at the **Castello Sannazzaro** in Giarole, a town under the jurisdiction of Casale Monferrato. These documents of national interest are protected by the Superintendency of Archival Assets, and it is no less than Count Sannazzaro himself who describes the collection to the castle's visitors and to guests staying overnight. The most important documents include a parchment from 1499 with the seal of Ludovico II Moro, authorising the Sannazzaro family to bring the proceeds of their goods duty-free from the Duchy of Milan to Monferrato; a parchment of Federico Gonzaga and his wife Margherita Paleologo dated 1535; an illuminated parchment of the Dominican fathers, offered as a gift to Count Antonio di Sannazzaro who had facilitated their entry into Monferrato; a Savoy parchment attesting to Filippo Sannazzaro's military office; a notarial deed from 1292 for the purchase of land around the castle; a 1340 copy of a 1311 document in which Henry VII confirmed the family's privileges; a 19th-century balance sheet of the estate's agricultural activity and the conferral of the Collar of the Annunziata; an important series of 17th-century scrolls making up a partially catalogued musical archive. The overall archive is so vast that it lacks a general catalogue and some portions remain unknown. In addition to the documents, visitors can admire a number of highly prestigious military decorations, such as the Cross of the Knights of Malta, the Collar of the Annunziata and the Grand Cross of the Legion of Gold, which belonged to the current count's grandfather and was awarded in 1918.



In Bassano del Grappa, Italy's first **Grappa Museum** was founded in 1993 by Jacopo Poli and his wife Cristina. It records the story of how grappa "was elevated from a simple belly-warmer to one of life's sublime pleasures," Poli himself explains. Today the museum welcomes an average of 150,000 visitors a year and ranks among the most visited business museums in Italy, boasting singular features such as the "Grappateca," the largest grappa collection in existence, consisting of around 2,000 bottles from some 500 distilleries, many of which are no longer in operation today. In 2011, a second museum was opened in Schiavon next to the distillery, offering a complete tour of the production process as well. And this year the fourth generation of the family is celebrating a double anniversary—125 years of Poli Distilleries and 30 years of the Poli Grappa Museum, crowned by a limited edition of 4,125 numbered bottles of Vaca Mora Riserva, aged for a full year in barriques of the historic bitter closely linked to the birth of the distillery, prepared by infusing sixteen herbs and spices according to the recipe of the founder, Gio Batta Poli. "Vaca Mora" was the popular term for the steam train that connected Vicenza to Bassano del Grappa. On 15 January 1885, Gio Batta Poli opened the "Al cappello" Osteria selling liqueurs and straw hats, directly opposite the train station in Schiavon. This commemorative bottle recalls that glorious beginning.

Another special and unique museum in Italy is the **Urbani Truffle Museum** in the medieval Umbrian village of Scheggino. Exhibits retell the entrepreneurial success of Carlo Urbani, the creator of truffle cultivation in Italy, known in America as the "king of the black truffle." His primacy will be safeguarded and developed by his heirs, his sons Paolo and Bruno Urbani. Inside the museum, visitors relive the history of the Urbani family and the major events that took place over the years. There are old hand-written invoices, telegrams and personal letters received from the United States, objects from the past such as the first improvised facility for washing by hand in the farmhouse of Carlo Urbani and his wife Olga, and a letter of thanks from President Ronald Reagan for the 1.1 kg of truffles sent by brothers Bruno and Paolo. The museum traces the history from the first steps taken by the Urbani family in the past through to the founding of the "Truffle Brotherhood" in the 1980s, and the awarding of the **Cavaliere del Lavoro** to Paolo Urbani in 1996, officially honouring him as a "Knight of Work." In Sesto San Giovanni, just a stone's throw from the centre of Milan, the **Campari Gallery** recounts the history of one of the world's best-known and best-loved aperitifs. It all started in 1860 when Gaspare Campari invented the revolutionary blend that has never been changed over the course of time. Seven years later, in 1867, he elected the Camparino in the Galleria as an iconic place, still today the temple of Milanese blending. On display are famous posters, such as the one from 1920 designed by Leonetto Campiello with its ironic imp wrapped in an orange peel. From the 1930s come Depero's futurist drawings. The collection includes more re-



cent commercials, such as the 1984 advert shot by the master of Italian cinema, Federico Fellini. An open-air museum on the Egadi Islands tells the story of Sicily's largest family and of an extraordinary world, that of tuna-fishing, which has essentially disappeared. We are talking about the former **Florio Factory** in Favignana, a true jewel of industrial archaeology. Here, in what became one of the most flourishing tuna canneries, the anchors and boats of the *mattanza* tuna-slaughter are preserved. But the former factory also represents the history of the Florio family and the way it intertwined with the life of the islanders, who found social redemption from poverty and a source of economic subsistence. With its great arches and high ceilings, the structure is almost reminiscent of a cathedral. The first nucleus came into being thanks to Giulio Drago from Genoa, who rented the tuna fishery in Favignana in 1859. In 1878, on the initiative of Ignazio Florio, the architect Damiani Almeyda renovated the buildings and thus began the fortunes of Favignana, which became the Florios' island par excellence. The factory covers some 32,000 square metres.

There is a one-of-a-kind fashion-related archive consisting of eighteen-thousand drawings on paper, twelve-thousand drawings on fabric, five-thousand antique drawings all of which involve 30 different printing techniques. The collection was assembled by the **Fashion Research Italy Foundation** in Bologna, created by the fashion industrialist Alberto Masotti (former owner of La Perla, a leading high-end lingerie brand). It comprises a variety of physical and digital archives. The largest section, the Renzo Brandone Collection, consists of 30,000 creations handmade by the best international textile designers starting from the second half of the 19th century. It holds a repertoire of surprising patterns and graphic variants representing different styles and eras, which can be visited by appointment as a valuable resource for research and inspiration in drawing up new fashion and design collections. Then there is the Emmanuel Schvili Collection, which brings together drawings, embroidery patterns, garments and advertising material for the company of the same name which, in Bologna during the 1970s, was the leader of a turning point in production, transforming garments into masterpieces thanks to cartoon-themed embroideries. Lastly, there is the Fashion Photography Archive project, a digital database of campaign photographs and advertising documents of the major Emilia-Romagna brands bearing witness to the evolution of product presentation in recent decades.

Finally, for those who love to delve into noir and have no fear of nightmares, here is a very special archive. It is the **Museum of the Impossible** in Bagni di Lucca, located in the splendid Villa Webb, also known as Villa Buonvisi, after the name of the family that commissioned the villa's construction in the year 1500. John Webb purchased the building in 1800 and died a violent death here. Lord Byron and Mary Shelley, the writer of *Frankenstein*, among others, stayed in this palace. And it was here that Christian Alpini, fascinated by the occult and by inexplicable and mysterious phenomena, decided to set up a unique exhibition twenty years ago. Among the rooms there are possessed dolls, books of witchcraft and the masks of cannibals—delightfully disturbing exhibits in a museum that allows you to travel through legends, fantasies and secrets to be discovered. This out-of-the-ordinary place, unmatched in the panorama of Italian museums, is the result of its founders' intensive and passionate research.



From top: the former Florio factory in Favignana, Urbani Museum and the old still at the Poli Grappa Museum

Page 12, from top: Castello Sannazzaro, Campari Museum and Museo dell'Impossibile

CASTLES WITHIN SKIING DISTANCE

From Piedmont to Friuli-Venezia Giulia, a heritage of fortified buildings dot the foothills and allow for sightseeing experiences, including overnight stays near the Alpine slopes

by GIAMBATTISTA MARCHETTO

Castello San Salvatore in Susegana
Credits Gino Fioretti



Castello dal Pozzo, near Lake Maggiore, a historic residence offering accommodation and catering

After a round of skiing in the morning when the snow is at its best, the time comes for a gastronomic break. All at once, eagerness to hit the slopes gives way to the desire to visit the surrounding area. It is time to unhook your bindings, change your boots for a pair of more comfortable mountain shoes and head downhill for an afternoon of historical and artistic knowledge. Where? The Alpine and sub-Alpine zone has always been a border region and, during the Middle Ages and Renaissance, was often the site of conflict between city-states, principalities and foreign powers. This crucial area holds many territories rich in natural resources such as timber, minerals and fertile farmland, hence castles were built as defensive structures to protect communities and communication routes from potential attacks. In their lofty fortified positions, the local lords could thus monitor activities in the valleys and transit routes, including waterways. From defence garrisons that also served as cultural and administrative centres for the local community, many of these castles have today become important historical sites and visitor attractions, offering travellers a window into the past and an opportunity to immerse themselves in the life of that period. And many of these structures are valuable parts of the ADSI network, open to the public for visits or special events.

BETWEEN TURIN AND MONTE ROSA

Starting from the west, there is no great distance between the Piedmontese castles and the ski areas around Turin and Pinerolo above Biella, in the zone of Prato Nevoso and in the area of Alagna (MonterosaSki). The **Castello Dal Pozzo** is located in Oleggio (Novara) and dates back to the 13th century. Built by the Visconti family who ruled Milan, it is surrounded by a centuries-old park and offers a panoramic view of Lake Maggiore. Over the ages, the castle has undergone several architectural transformations, most notably the adaptation to neo-Gothic-Victorian forms by the English architect Richard Poppelwell Pullan, yet it has retained much of its medieval character and is still today the home of the Marquises Dal Pozzo d'Annone. It houses an elegant luxury hotel from which to explore the slopes, and a fine restaurant offers visitors the opportunity to indulge in the charm of this venerable residence. The **Castello dei Solaro**, 40 km from Turin, was built in 1200 by the noble Princes of Acaja as a military outpost against the powerful Marquisate of Saluzzo. Acquired in 1362 by the Solaro family from Asti, it was refined in the 16th century and again in the 19th century, when the east wing of the manor and two towers were demolished. After serving as a hospital for seventy years, it was turned into a hospitality paradise by the Ronco family at the end of the 20th century. Divided into two main areas, the mansion and the stables, the castle is now an elegant location for private events and weddings, with an in-house kitchen. The 15,000-square-metre park is embellished with flower beds, fountains and statues. The 12th-century building complex that makes up the **Castello di Marchierù** includes an aristocratic chapel, the caretaker's annex, the stables and the old Soave farmstead. Originally built by the Savoy Acaja family with fortified defensive characteristics, it was transformed in the 18th century into a residential home characterised in the inner courtyard by the use of



coloured horizontal bands in the neo-Gothic style. Within a wall that surrounds it entirely, the 19th-century park retains its original charm. The latest heirs and current owners are Counts Filippi di Baldissero and Prunas Tola Arnaud of San Salvatore, who host events and ceremonies in the ancient spaces. The **Castello di Villar Dora** in the Turin area has medieval origins. It was built in the 13th century, as can be deduced from the towers and fortified walls that have not been altered despite several renovations over the centuries. The castle is privately owned, but can be visited by appointment. Reconstructed in the 17th century by Amedeo di Castellamonte, the first architect of the Savoy family and designer of the Reggia di Venaria, the **Castello di Castellamonte** consists of a white palace which, between the 13th-century walls and the 15th-century towers, was modelled on the outline of the original ancient medieval building. In 1066, the life of the castle was already documented on the promontory that dominates the entire Canavese area. History has brought many transformations, the most significant in the mid-19th century with the addition of the characteristic Red Tower in neo-Gothic style. Today the halls of the Torre Rossa, which passed to the Counts Ricardi di Netro, host concerts, parties and exhibitions. Situated at the entrance to the Chisone Valley, the **Castello di Miradolo** in Pinerolo consists of a noble part and a rustic part, the layout of which dates back to the 17th and 18th centuries, later redesigned and extended in the second half of the 19th century. This was the home of the ancient Massel and Cacherano families of Bricherasio. A park of over six hectares surrounds the structure and still reveals the design modes and tastes of the late 18th century, despite the 19th century extension. The restoration of the greenhouse, highlighting the original volumes and materials, has made it possible to give an extraordinary space back to the castle. The Cosso Foundation organises exhibitions as well theatrical and musical events in the castle's spaces undergoing reclamation. Moving to the Biella area, the **Castello di Montecavallo**—albeit of relatively recent construction compared to the medieval structures in the vicinity—enjoys a certain architectural importance as a rare example of neo-Gothic style in the area. The central body is square in shape. A windowed gallery connects it to the chapel and another block, now used as *de charme* rooms and a farm holiday home. Built by Filiberto Avogadro around 1830 in neo-Gothic style, it is now oriented towards hospitality with two *de charme* rooms inside the guesthouse and farm holiday services. It is also possible to book tastings of the wines produced by the winery of the same name.

AT THE FOOT OF THE LOMBARDY ALPS

While Livigno and Bormio may be the best-known ski resorts in Lombardy, it is also worthwhile to explore the areas of Ponte di Legno, the Forcora Pass and Mottarone as far as the Pini di Bobbio for both downhill and cross-country skiing. From the mountain areas, the castles lying between Varese and Bergamo can easily be reached. The **Castello di Caidate** in Sumirago within the province of Varese dates back to the 12th century. After changing hands from family to family, it now may be visited by the public. The **Castello di Rossino** in Calolziocorte commands a view of the mountains overlooking the Lecco area. It is an ancient manor house dating back to the 13th century and stands on a hill with a panoramic vista of Lake Como. Restored, it is now used for events, and also offers guided tours to learn about the history and architecture of the place. Situated instead in the middle of the Valtellina mountains, not too far from the Orobie and Livigno, is the historic **Palazzo Salis** in Tirano in the province of Sondrio. Considered one of the most important examples of Renaissance architecture in the area, it is named after the family that built in the 17th century. It is characterised by an elegant façade and an inner courtyard with arcades. Today, the Palazzo Salis is a hotel *de charme* offering overnight stays in rooms furnished in period style.

BETWEEN VALSUGANA AND VALLE ISARCO

Entering Trentino from Valsugana on the road to the Lagorai slopes, one can see the silhouette of **Castel Ivano** towering over the enchanting historic centre of Borgo Valsugana. Having changed hands over the centuries from Ezzelino da Romano to Cangrande della Scala, from the Carraresi to the diocese of Feltre, from the Serenissima to the Habsburgs, the 6th-century fortified structure stands on the promontory of Monte Lefre and exerts an immediate charm. Passing through the great arch in the walls, one seems to enter a fairytale

universe amidst ancient beauty and the scars of history. It is possible to book a visit to the castle premises (now mainly used for events), and also to stay for lunch or a wine-tasting. The current ownership of Castel Ivano is involved in the Terre del Lagorai project, which brings together a group of winegrowers in a wine initiative that offers an intriguing variation of the classic Trentodoc method and a fine glass of pure Pinot Noir. Set in an evocative location, the **Castello d Toblino** takes its name from the Trentino lake amid whose waters it stands, overlooking a rocky islet. The earliest documented evidence dates back to the 12th century and in fact the imposing medieval architecture gives the place an enchanted atmosphere. It has undergone several architectural transformations over the centuries and is currently privately owned, but is open to the public for guided tours. During the visit, you may explore the rooms of the castle, admire the historical furnishings and appreciate the medieval atmosphere. Not too far from the Paganella ski area, but also accessible from the slopes of the South Tyrolean valleys, the **Castello di Enn** in Montagna/Montan is located in the Isarco Valley. The defensive structure dates back to the 13th century and features the typical architecture of South Tyrolean medieval castles, surrounded by walls and towers that contribute to its imposing appearance. In a panoramic position, the castle offers a view of the surrounding mountains and the valley. It is currently open to the public, who can admire the historic decor, and it also hosts cultural events and happenings.

THE LURE OF THE PRE-ALPS

Nestled amidst the rolling Prosecco hills, a few kilometres from the Belluno Pre-Alps (at Nevegal, one can ski during the snowy season) and not too far from the ski resorts of the Dolomites—from Civetta to Falcade/Sanpellegrino—the **Castello di San Salvatore** was transformed from an impregnable fortress in the Middle Ages into an elegant stately home during the Renaissance. Of ancient Longobard origin, the Collalto family, who ruled Treviso around the year 1000, founded the castles of Collalto and San Salvatore. The latter, with its thirty-thousand square metres of surface area, came to be one of the largest fortified complexes in Europe. A sumptuous background in the paintings of Cima da Conegliano and the home of Monsignor Giovanni Della Casa during the writing of the *Galateo*, the Castle was renovated following the bombings of World War One. Today, after a millennium of family history, it is Princess Isabella Collalto de Croÿ who personally oversees the Conte Collalto winery and, since 2018, the Castello San Salvatore as well. Open to the public for events and ceremonies, it offers refined hospitality in the Borgo and winery facilities, with flats for couples or families. It further holds a penthouse suite for 4 people for an exclusive stay at the highest point of the castle. From the slopes in the Dolomites, we move to the Asiago Plateau, known for its family-friendly ski area, and also for its exciting trails for cross-country skiers. Beneath the mountains of Asiago, the 15th-century **Castello di Thiene** is an example of a pre-Palladian villa, as the Gothic building combines the characteristics of the castle with those of the Venetian palace, particularly the *casa-fondaco*, a dwelling/storehouse for leisure and work. Opposite the entrance tower stands the 15th-century church dedicated to the Nativity of the Virgin Mary with oratory, sacristy and chaplain's house. The furnishings of the rooms are intact, including an extensive collection of portraits. The early 18th-century stables designed by architect Francesco Muttoni are splendid. Surrounding the castle are 12,000 square metres of greenery embracing the large noble court and the park with its citrus house, icehouse, irrigation ditch and Renaissance grotto. The castle is still in the hands of the Counts of Thiene, who are committed to optimising the great building in order to make it accessible to scholars or the merely curious.

ON THE BORDER WITH SLOVENIA

To the east, the Carnic and Julian Alps offer the opportunity to ski (cross-country and downhill) on the Zoncolan and in the Kanin-Sella Nevea area on the border between Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Slovenia. In the valley, the **Castello di Ahrenspreng** near Pulfero, a few kilometres from the border, is also known as the Malborghetto Castle. Dating back to the Middle Ages, the historical structure was built with a defensive function and has undergone several transformations over the centuries. Today it houses a restaurant and hosts events, maintaining an authentic and evocative atmosphere.

On the two pages, from left: castles of Montecavallo, Solaro, Thiene, Toblino, Villar Dora and Castel Ivano





CATANIA-PADUA, A BRIDGE CALLED DON QUIXOTE

Two seemingly distant cities, both tied to Cervantes's character by a curious pictorial analogy that reveals an uncommon sensitivity towards literature and the arts among the patrons of the time

by **LUCA BONACINI**

Set in the heart of Spain, in the Castile-La Mancha region with Toledo as its capital, amidst slopes dotted with vineyards, olive groves, the ruins of ancient manors and, of course, windmills, Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, four centuries after it was written, remains an altogether contemporary text that is still talked about. Replete with ironic potential, the title character is a positive hero, an avid reader of chivalric novels who can no longer discern reality from fantasy. Believing himself to be a knight, he fights for a lost cause, uncompromisingly adhering to his principles, complete with his steed, his squire and a noblewoman to save. The novel is actually two books inspired by the picaresque-epic-chivalric genre: the first was written by Cervantes in 1605, the second ten years later, to prevent the proliferation of apocrypha in a region where, especially in the Middle Ages, Christians, Muslims and Jews coexisted peacefully. Generations of later writers owe much to this milestone text. Kafka wrote a short story entitled "The Truth about Sancho Panza" in which Quixote is an invention of Sancho, who reveals a revolutionary soul, while Quixote sees books as reproductions of reality, in the same way as did medieval books of chivalry. Michael Focault, in his book *The Words and Things*, wrote, "Quixote wants to be faithful to the book he has become." For Borges, conversely, Cervantes' book "is a great game about reality, where we are all involved in a story in which we ourselves are inscribed." And then there was Dostoevsky to be inspired by Cervantes' hidalgo. While writing *The Idiot*, he remarked in his notes that Prince Myshkin must have Quixote's limping gait. *The Idiot* is the madman, he pointed out, incapable of coming to terms with his own ideas, his own interiority, his life. So *Don Quixote* is a book that spawns other books, inspiring even authors and poets who appear unconnected to one another. Poetry and music are also indebted to this masterpiece. Just think of the Cervantes-based works of Francesco Guccini and Lucio Dalla.

The son of a travelling barber-surgeon, Cervantes was involved in a brawl, injured a man



and had to flee to Italy. Later, in 1571, he fought in the battle of Lepanto where he lost his left hand. Taken prisoner and sent to Algiers for five years, he presumably landed in Naples and Sicily, perhaps to heal himself, where he may have become acquainted with the Sicilian puppet theatre, which we find in *Don Quixote* of 1605. It is hard to imagine that a life as adventurous as the one the writer led—from the bloody battles he participated in to the journeys he made by land and sea—was not a source of inspiration for the writing of *Don Quixote*, published when the author was 57 years of age.

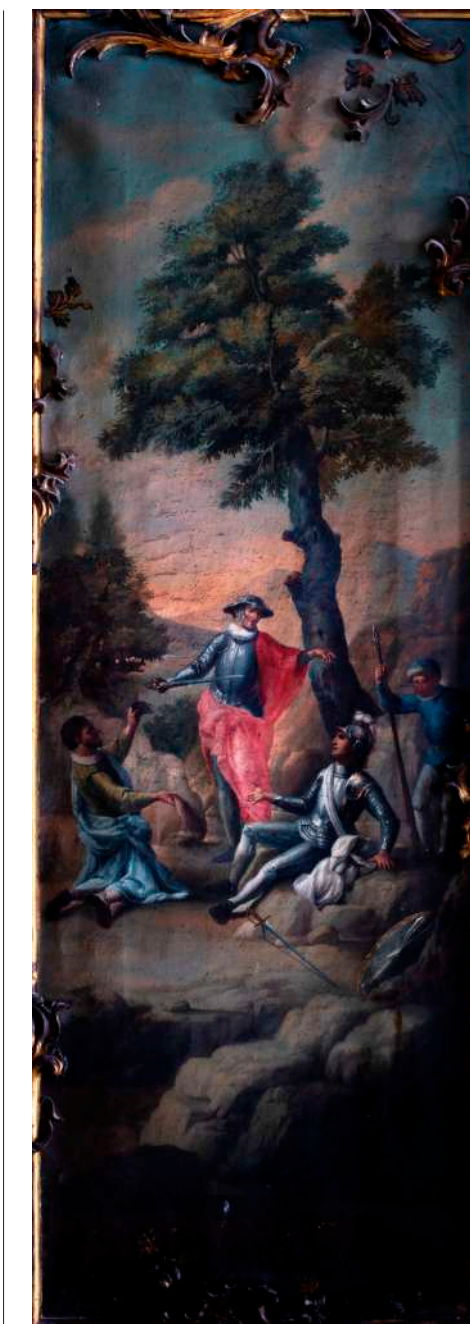
No doubt, this fundamental work of world literature also inspired artists whose names we may never know, such as those who frescoed the princely rooms of two historic Italian palaces of ancient aristocratic lineage, dedicated to the famous literary character created by Cervantes. **Palazzo Biscari** (Catania) and **Palazzo San Bonifacio** (Padua) at the opposite end of the peninsula, where a series of frescoes devoted to Don Quixote were painted around the 18th century. What or who could have inspired the owners of the two palaces, located over 1200 kilometres apart? The enigma can never be unravelled with certainty, but we do know that Cervantes' book was already famous in the 1700s, thanks to the works that drew inspiration from it by Antoine Coypel (paintings, tapestries from the Gobelins Royal Manufactory), which began in 1717 and were finished in 1794. The saga of Don



Quixote de la Mancha inspired other artists, from Claude Gillot to Charles Natoire, from Giuseppe Bonito to Simon Fokke, and there are many editions of C. A. Coypel's *Don Quixote* scattered throughout Europe and the United States, the Quirinale in Rome holding the largest collection, but there are also editions at the Palazzo Reale in Turin, at the Louvre, at the Mobilier National in Paris, and also in Richmond, in New York and in Vienna.

The painting cycles in Catania and Padua inspired by the literary work of Miguel de Cervantes may therefore have been commissioned to artists in vogue at the time by the families owning the two buildings, each with different motivations, but both united, as may be guessed, by a passion for art and beauty. Palazzo San Bonifacio, located in Padua on the corner of Via Isabella Andreini and Via S. Gregorio Barbarigo, has been owned by the dynasty of the same name, of Frankish origin, since the 16th century. In the 10th century, the San Bonifacio family were counts and marquises of Verona in the retinue of Berengario I. It was only with the advent of the Swabians that they were driven out by Ezzelino da Romano and took refuge in the feud of San Bonifacio, also in the province of Verona, maintaining and acquiring over the centuries various other properties in the Veneto region, especially in Padua and its territories. In a room in the western sector of the palace where a chapel once stood, there are eight valuable frescoes depicting the exploits of Don Quixote, decorated with Rococo frames, which are the only example of the genre known to date in the Veneto region. There are two historical hypotheses that might underlie these paintings, and both have a noblewoman at their core. One dates back to the period between 1667 and 1765, when Ercole Maria San Bonifacio, a leading figure in Paduan culture at the time, a generous patron of the arts involved in public works in the city and one of the financiers who made it possible to complete the paving of Prato della Valle, decided to follow up the cycle of frescoes to honour his second wife Maddalena Revese, taking inspiration from the set designs of the San Samuele Theatre in Venice, near which he had a second residence. The other involves the thesis that an enterprising ancestor of the family, by commissioning the striking pictorial cycle, had wanted to pay homage to his companion Cecilia Jacorigi, a Spanish gentlewoman he had met in the retinue of Napoleon, of whom he was a follower. As for Palazzo Biscari alla Marina, in Via Museo Biscari no. 10 in Catania, we are helped by the book *Don Quixote in Catania* published by Sikè Euno-Edizioni, edited by Roberto Costanzo. It is an interesting work full of information and images, describing in great detail the history of the palace, dwelling on an alcove known as "Don Quixote" because it is covered with boiserie panelling in which sixteen canvases are set depicting the adventures of the hidalgo created by the imagination of Miguel de Cervantes. The artist may have been inspired by a famous French translation, adorned with engravings by the artist Coypel, which circulated widely in the second half of the 18th century and to which Prince Ignazio Biscari most probably wanted to refer, mindful of his Neapolitan sojourns, bringing to the private flats of his palace in Catania hints of the Neapolitan cultural environment with which he had come into contact. Padua and Catania: two apparently distant cities linked to Don Quixote by a curious pictorial analogy highlighting in the patrons of the time an uncommon sensitivity towards literature and the arts. Even more, it almost seems as if the two cities are united by an ideal bridge, which brings us back to 13 June, the yearly date when we remember St. Anthony, patron of the city of Padua and the place where he died in 1232 at the age of 35. Born in Portugal, Anthony travelled to Assisi and came to know St Francis, having the privilege of listening to his speeches before being sent by him on a mission to France. If in Padua there is a basilica dedicated to St. Anthony, in Catania his cult is worshipped in the church of the same name located in Viale Mario Rapisardi, one of the most frequented by the people of Catania, where devotion to the saint belonging to the Franciscan order is deeply felt. Similar harmony is also found between the universities of Padua and Catania, which in 2021 signed an agreement with the Ugandan university of Makerere, thereby finalising an undertaking that broadens scientific relations and intensifies international mobility and opportunities for collaboration in various areas of research and education.

Many thanks for the kind collaboration of Roberto Costanzo, Luisa San Bonifacio, Federico San Bonifacio, Cecilia San Bonifacio and Maria Cristina Rossin Ardit.



In the photos: frescoes in the princely rooms of Palazzo Biscari in Catania and Palazzo San Bonifacio in Padua, created around the 18th century



CHRISTMAS DISHES, SERVED FOR CENTURIES

What specialties did historic houses prepare for the most important feast of the year?

A timbale of tagliolini di Campofilone at Villa Clarice, a timbale of tortellini in a puff pastry crust at Castello Gallelli. And then the agnolotti stuffed with pork sausage at Castello Tagliolo and no less than 14 courses at Palazzo Spadaro Libertini

by **Gabriele Principato**

R

ich timbales inspired by the French. Monumental desserts like Mont Blanc, with its chestnut puree and fresh cream. Favourite delights, such as mouth-watering hot agnolotti with wine. And recipes to be cooked together in a spirit of community and sharing. The families who

continue to reside in and preserve Italy's historic homes carry on treasured rituals during the Christmas festivities, perpetuating traditions and strengthening, year after year, the love for the history to which there are affectionately tied.

VILLA CLARICE PORTO SAN GIORGIO - FERMO

“Festive tables at Villa Clarice were set with our finest china. There were courses of tortellini, cappelletti, galantine with almonds and truffles, Russian salad and countless desserts including tiramisu,” **Donatella Amici de Cocci** recounts. “On the evening of 24 December, my husband Giuseppe’s favourite dish was and still is pasta with clams.” That’s how things have always been at Villa Clarice in Porto San Giorgio in the province of Fermo. The house is surrounded by a three-hectare park, with Mediterranean vegetation in which holm oaks, laurels, pines and palm trees of different varieties prevail, taking on majestic dimensions in some areas over time. It is accessed via a long avenue of linden trees. Construction of the villa was commissioned in the 1880s by Countess Clarice Bonafede. “In the hall where we celebrate Christmas, there are frescoes by Maestro Egidio Coppola.” These dreamy floral-fauna images are part of the reason for the building’s protection under the Superintendency of Architectural Heritage and Landscape of the Marche Region. “Another typical dish of my husband’s family—the Bonafede family—is the timballo of tagliolini di Campofilone pasta encased in salted pastry and seasoned in layers with meat sauce and béchamel. A delicious dish that we still make,” she explains. “Once upon a time, there was no shortage of roast chicken on the table, which was prepared the day before and sewn so that the slices would be perfectly oval. Cooking this dish has always meant a moment of family love and community.”



Above: a salon in the Villa

Opening photo: Villa Clarice in Porto San Giorgio

CASTELLO GALLELLI BADOLATO - CATANZARO

“When I was a child, my father used to decorate a large fir tree in the grounds of the house on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. He liked the idea that it was a living tree that would remind year-round of the special atmosphere of sharing what we experienced at Christmas in the castle,” says Baron **Ettore Gallelli di Badolato**. “For festive lunches and dinners, the whole family would gather in the great hall of the palazzo,” a fortress built on a panoramic hillside in 1853 to defend against attacks by brigands in the centre of a 630-hectare latifundium estate in Badolato, home to 2,800 souls in the province of Catanzaro. “We set the table in the French style, in keeping with the wines and many of the recipes that took turns at the table. Our Christmas dessert was and still is Mont Blanc”—made with a puree of chestnuts and fresh cream. “This is because in noble families like ours, there was a lot of gastronomic cross-pollination as a result of visits to royal courts, travel, and also family unions.” In the manor house that dominates the countryside of the Pietranera estate, the family continues to gather whenever possible during the holidays, despite living in Rome. “And the table is never without a timbale of tortellini in a puff pastry crust, an ancient recipe, our own, that we love very much,” he says. “Today we no longer decorate the tree, but we do set up a nativity scene in the impressive Hall of Arms,” which houses the largest collection of private armour in southern Italy, dating from between 1380 and 1550. This is not the only special feature of the estate. There is also a papal salon, the only one existing in Calabria, a wooden Baroque-style seat reserved for His Holiness, should he visit. A custom reserved for members of the papal family and therefore also for the Gallelli family of Badolato, since the current baron was received into the prestigious College of Papal Parafrenieri on 25 November 2014.



The Castle viewed from outside



Riserva del Marchese, sparkling wine produced at the Castello di Tagliolo.

Below: the Historic House in the snow

CASTELLO DI TAGLIOLO TAGLIOLO MONFERRATO - ALESSANDRIA

“On 25 December, my mother, Maria Immacolata, used to cook stuffed turkey and invite neighbours and friends who were alone or had small families like ours to spend Christmas together at the castle. It was rather a tradition of ours,” says Marquis **Luca Pinelli Gentile**. His ancestors acquired the manor of Tagliolo, home to 1500 souls in Monferrato in the province of Alessandria. That purchase was in 1498, but the manor’s history was much older. Built around the year 1000, when the first watchtowers were erected on the Ovada hills, it had been the object of contention between the Duchy of Milan and the Republic of Genoa. “Today” we spend Christmas with close family. Many friends and neighbours of the past are no longer here, and our habits have also changed somewhat. With mamma and papà Oberto, my wife Angela and our daughters, we prefer to gather at the castle for Christmas Eve. And on the table there is never a shortage of agnolotti stuffed with pork sausage, typical of Tagliolo, seasoned with butter and sage, even if sometimes, as is the Monferrato tradition, we ‘wine’ them while they are still hot, meaning we pour a little of the typical Dolcetto di Ovada over them. A true delicacy.” The inevitable dessert is *bonet*, a kind of pudding made with eggs, cocoa, milk and amaretti biscuits. “We pair it with a wine that my great-grandfather invented a hundred years ago: a Dolcetto Chinato, with gentian, cinnamon, cinchona and star anise. We call this wine ‘In...chino.’ But we also produce a Dolcetto di Ovada DOC, a Cortese dell’Alto Monferrato, the sparkling Riserva del Marchese Brut and also a grappa. We are still the only castle in the area to have preserved the winemaking tradition, something that fascinates the tourists who come to visit us, many of whom sleep in the guest houses we have built in the medieval village adjacent to the manor house.”



PALAZZO SPADARO LIBERTINI CALTAGIRONE - CATANIA

“On the evening of 24 December, the ‘Christmas risotto’ ruled the table at the palace,” says **Lara Marina Gravina di Belmonte**. “Not a real risotto as one might be led to think, but a very rich baked timbale of rice, with a reduction sauce made with three types of meat and layers of tomato, raisins, almonds, walnuts and figs... In the oldest recipe there was also chocolate,” she explains. “There was also a version with a heart of seasoned macaroni. It was the second course after the antipasto, based on fried battered thistles, artichokes, fried cream, brains, spinelle pears, sweetbreads, fennel, cauliflower, potato and rice croquettes—passed on as a somewhat revised rendering of a French tradition. After all, noble families were experimenters once upon a time.” A lawyer who lives and works in Milan, Lara Marina Gravina di Belmonte acquired from her cousin Alvise Spadaro Gravina the representative portion of the 18th-century Palazzo Spadaro Libertini in Caltagirone, near Catania, which in 2001 was officially declared a monumental property of major artistic interest. Lara, with the help of her mother Gemma, has restored the palazzo to its former splendour, reviving the precious damasks, the lacquered and gold-laminated fixtures, the Aubusson carpets made in France, the salons that once hosted Richard Wagner and Don Luigi Sturzo beneath the vaults covered by Francesco Vaccaro’s canvases, and the 1860 Pleyel Wolf grand piano, still in perfect working order in the centre of the Hall of Mirrors. “Traditionally, Christmas dinner at the house of the Barons of Belmonte had to have no less than fourteen courses. It started between 1:30 and 2 p.m. and ended in the evening. There was roast pork covered with sweet and sour onion sauce, artichokes with hot sauce, pork jelly... Then we moved on to desserts such as *buccellato* and *collorelle*, typical Caltagirone biscuits, and tangerine frosting. This abundance continued for as long as my grandfather Francesco di Paola was around. Today, we celebrate in Milan where we live, and everything is more restrained,” she says. “This year, though, we will not fail to come to Caltagirone during the holidays. In the oldest part of the building, we will make a large nativity scene, where there is a stone wall from the 1100s that gives a medieval atmosphere, complete with 15th-century stone columns and a Baroque dome.” Another nativity is permanently present in the family chapel. “It is made of Caltagirone majolica ceramic, the modern work of the artist Anna Boria, and it has the special feature that the Three Kings are decorated with pure gold.”



Nativity in the chapel of Palazzo Spadaro Libertini

A HOMAGE TO MARIE LOUISE

La Signora in Dolce makes a stop at the Castle of Tabiano (Parma) where pastry chef Luigi Morini is the guardian of a recipe made with hazelnuts, chocolate and zabaglione, dedicated to the Duchess so loved by her subjects

by **LA SIGNORA IN DOLCE**



Where the glorious Duchy of Parma and Piacenza once stood, a dessert celebrates the historical figure of Marie Louise of Hapsburg-Lorraine, wife of Napoleon and Empress of the French, who became the beloved Duchess of this territory after her consort's exile. The cake, the "Duchessa di Parma," was invented in the late 1940s by a famous Parma pastry chef named Bizzi, who dedicated this delight to the unforgettable ruler. It was later brought back into vogue by the Pasticceria Torino shop in the centre of the ducal city, and it was here that Luigi Morini learnt its secrets. Today, Morini is in charge of the pastry operations of one of the castles of the ancient Duchy—the **Castello di Tabiano**, a historic residence built over a thousand years ago by the Pallavicino marquises, purchased in 1882 by the Corazza family. The property is currently owned by **Giacomo Corazza Martini** who—together with his children Maria Cristina, Maria Chiara, Anna Maria and Carlo—opened the property to the public several years ago, transforming it into a Relais de Charme where history and nature intertwine to offer guests a truly regal experience. The Antico Caseificio, formerly a Parmigiano Reggiano DOP cheese factory, is now a restaurant that serves traditional dishes from the Parma area, including the dessert revived by pastry chef Morini, custodian of the secret recipe he shared with me and with readers of *Le Dimore Storiche*. The deeper secrets for its perfect realisation remain hidden in any case, and to taste the real Duchessa di Parma, there is no other way but to travel to the hills of Salsomaggiore Terme, where Castello di Tabiano is located. The cake is certainly not the only reason to visit; the splendour of the ballroom alone is worth the trip. Yet the experience of lunch and dessert at the Antico Caseificio afforded me the additional pleasure of this sweet expedition to the Duchy. After all, the Corazza family has an established track record in the restaurant business, having created a veritable chain of Italian restaurants in London in the second half of the 19th century. Today, they offer the pluses of "zero-metre" agriculture,



with ingredients coming from the vegetable gardens, orchards and olive groves on the property. But let us return to the "Duchessa." Morini presented it to me as a cake "from another era," even in terms of calories. The result, however, is a light and contemporary cake despite the richness of ingredients such as hazelnuts, zabaglione and chocolate. The fork makes its way between the discs of fragrant wafer, encountering different flavours that blend together almost perfectly; the "almost" is due to the lack of resting time for this Duchess, since it was prepared immediately before tasting. The fragrance and pleasant oiliness of the hazelnut mixture is sublime, bringing to mind the crispness of a crunchy pastry. The combination of chocolate and zabaglione is sheer perfection. The cherries in spirit as a decoration are unusual and intriguing, a real touch of nobility. Would Marie Louise have appreciated it? I'm sure she would, because her sweet tooth has also gone down in history.

From left: Maria Cristina Corazza, pastry chef Luigi Morini and La Signora in Dolce before the walls of Tabiano Castle

Facing page, from top: La Signora in Dolce with the Duchess of Parma and the Castle's ballroom

THE RECIPE

DUCHESSA DI PARMA

Recipe from Castello di Tabiano, Ristorante Antico Caseificio, pastry chef Luigi Morini

INGREDIENTS

For the dough: 200 gm roasted Piedmont hazelnuts, 200 gm sugar, 200 gm butter, 300 gm flour, 2 egg yolks. **For the zabaglione:** 150 gm sugar, 200 gm Marsala, 8 egg yolks. **For the melted chocolate:** half a litre of cream and 600 gm of chocolate

PROCEDURE

Chop the hazelnuts together with sugar and flour, taking care not to release the oil from the hazelnuts. Knead together with the butter, then let the dough rest in the refrigerator for 3-4 hours. Take mixture out and knead it again by machine or by hand until the dough becomes almost elastic, then roll it out with a rolling pin to a thickness of about 3 cm. Take a round surface and make three disks 15-20 cm in diameter and bake at 180 degrees for 15-20 min. Then prepare the melted chocolate, let it cool and let air incorporate until the colour changes. Cover the first disc with the chocolate, apply the second disc and cover with the zabaglione, close with the third disc and cover the whole thing with the remaining chocolate so that no zabaglione spills out. Complete with the leftover chopped hazelnuts and decorate with cherries in spirit.





THE REBIRTH OF PALAZZO TORNIELLI

In Molare (Alessandria), renovation work nears completion on a historic residence whose future is tied to hospitality. Since 1834, it has been owned by the Tornielli di Crestvolant family

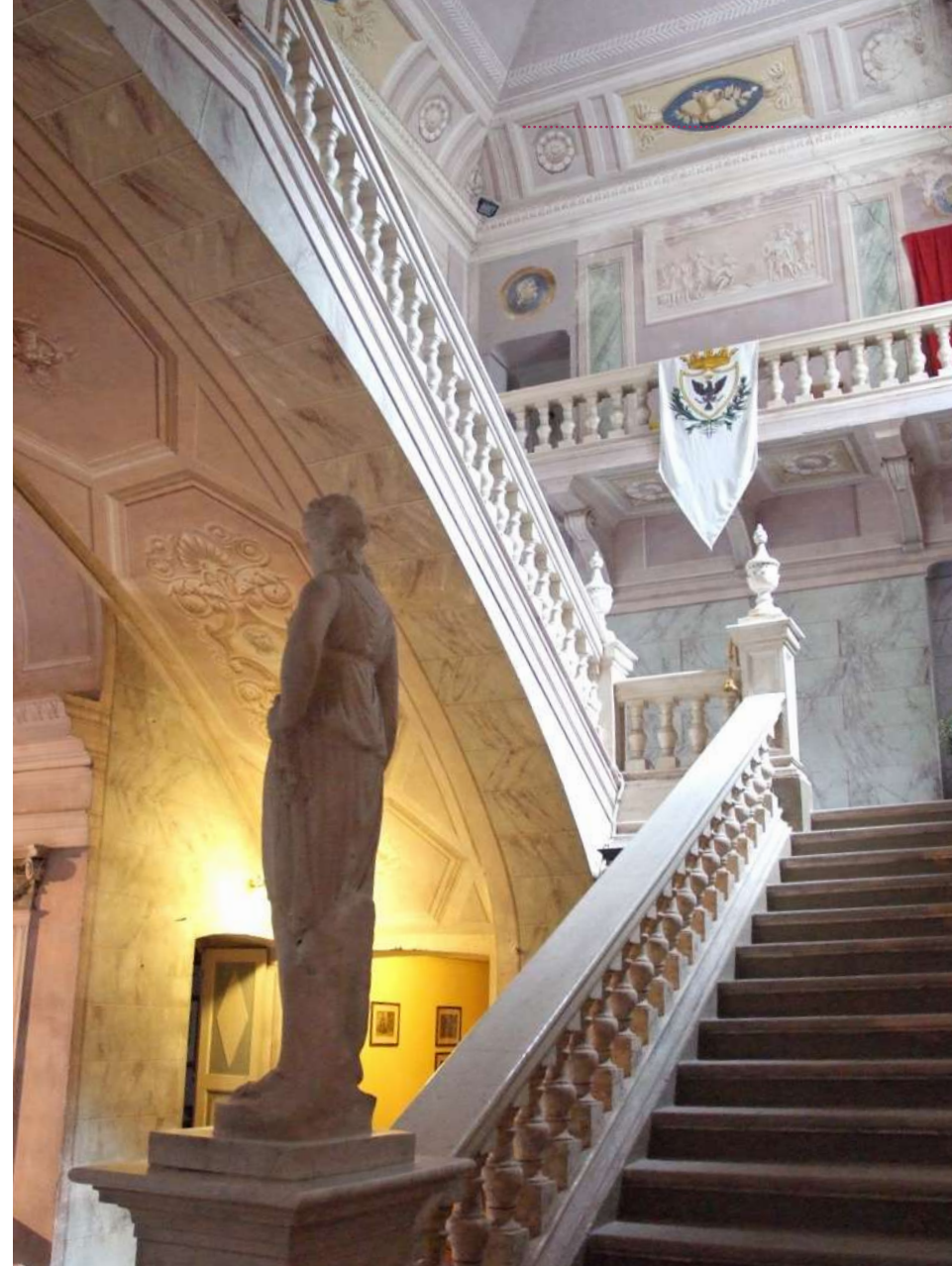
by **CRISTINA CIMATO**

The spring of 2024 will mark a season of rebirth for **Palazzo Tornielli di Crestvolant** in Molare in the province of Alessandria. The mansion, which stands on the ruins of a 13th-century Malaspina castle and has been owned by the same family since 1834, is the subject of an impressive restoration project now nearing completion. In the 190 years since Count Celestino Tornielli purchased it, the house has been the setting for a noble history, handed on from generation to generation. Today, the primary custodian is Countess Maria Luisa, together with her son Federico Tornielli, his wife Alma and their progeny, Vittorio and Nicolò. “In 2021, we started work on the restoration and renovation of a property which, because of its majestic nature, has always required a good amount of care. Over time, structural issues came to light that led us to a complete renovation,” explains Count Tornielli. “Thanks to the favourable conditions of the moment, we were able to proceed with work on the entire exterior and its decorations with the coats of arms, friezes and mottos of our lineage. We also reworked the central sundial in the medieval building, adapting it to our time.” According to the original design, the palace consisted of two floors. In 1840, however, Celestino’s son Giovanni Tornielli added a third, also constructing two turrets and commissioning the interior decorations by the Ovada painter Ignazio Tosi. The main entrance to the mansion is characterised by two spectacular staircases leading to the upper floor, while a triumphal arch bearing the family emblem adorns the doorway to the ballroom. “The rooms have remained intact. The main chamber is the Bishop’s Room, with a ceiling decorated in pure gold on a blue background and an 18th-century four-poster bed,” Count **Federico Tornielli** says. “Then there is the music room and the billiard room with decorations that echo Renaissance motifs. Some interior frescoes will be the subject of later restoration.”

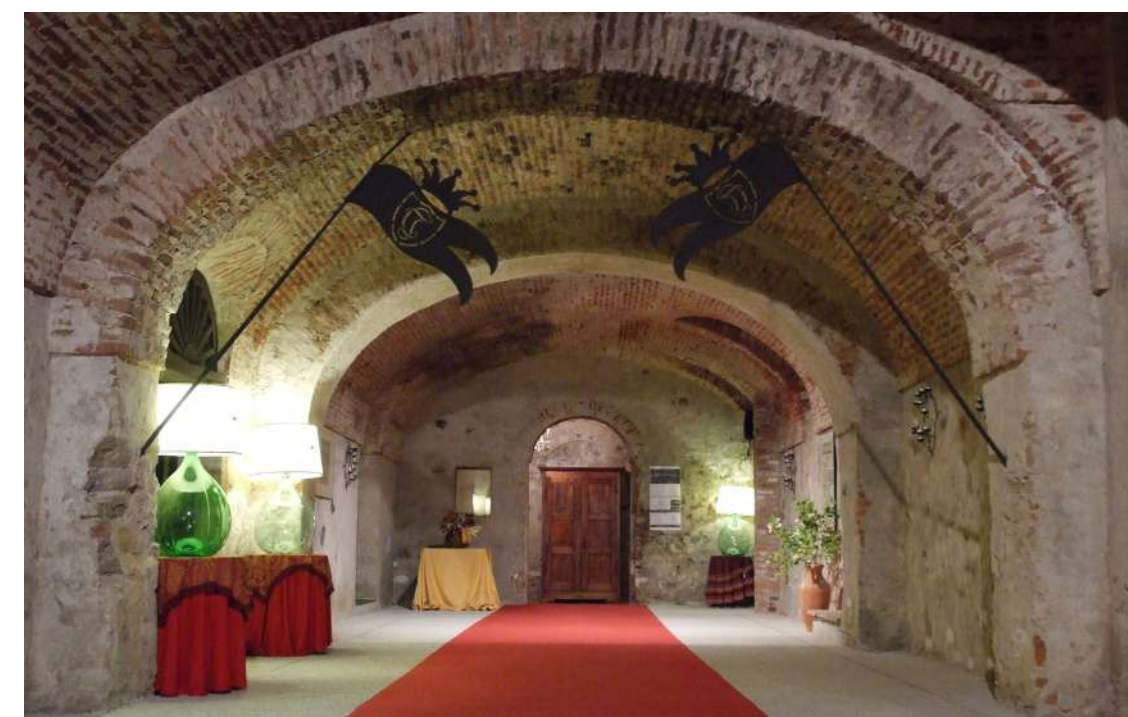
Used since the 19th century for holiday purposes, the house has always been the fam-



ily meeting place for parties and entertainment. It also has enjoyed a public vocation through its membership to ADSI, the Italian Historic Houses Association. Already a location for weddings and other events such as film and photographic shoots, it is likely in 2024 to expand its use to include niche accommodation with the possibility of staying overnight. "This place is a mirror of our family, our origins and the land we come from, a Piedmontese reality that is a source of pride for us," Tornielli adds. Countess Maria Luisa has long been a favourite hostess to members of the public during visits here, and it is thanks to her that the residence has remained accessible and well-preserved. "She has always been the one to welcome guests and retell our story," concludes the Count, who finds new delight in welcoming visitors to a beautiful structure that offers not only a journey into a private legacy of excellence but also a plunge into the past. "Guests from abroad are particularly fascinated by buildings that are the unique heritage our country. Many visitors, coming perhaps from the United States, have Italian origins. It is also through buildings like this one that they reconnect with their private history and a tradition of beauty that also runs through their veins."



Pictures of Palazzo Tornielli di Crestvolant in Molare. Restoration work began in 2021 and the residence, atop the ruins of a 13th-cen. castle, has been owned by the Tornielli family for nearly 200 years





Castello di Barrea
Photo by Valentino Mastrella

THE CENTENNIAL PARK THAT UNITES THREE REGIONS

Travelling in the Abruzzo National Park, discovering unspoilt places, historic buildings, delicious cuisine and an abundance of nature, history and art

by **ELEONORA LOPES**



One of the oldest parks in Italy, the National Park of Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise, officially established in 1923, has just turned 100 years old. Abruzzo further boasts the title of “Europe’s Green Region” thanks to the presence of no less than three national parks: the Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise National Park, the Majella National Park and the Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga

National Park, plus the Sirente-Velino Regional Natural Park, the Torre del Cerrano Protected Marine Area and 38 other protected areas, amounting to 36.3% of the region’s total surface area. A record for all of Europe.

But let us return to the Abruzzo National Park, a treasure trove of natural beauty which, thanks to the foresight of a group of local personalities, was founded through private initiative on 9 September 1922, later receiving official status on 13 January 1923. The park is one of the rare areas in western Europe where you can still come across animals such as the wolf, the golden eagle, the Abruzzo chamois, the lynx and the Marsican bear, the latter being the symbol of the park, also sadly known for recent news stories with unhappy endings.

Today, the Park extends over about 50,000 hectares, encompassing territory in three regions (Abruzzo, Lazio, Molise), three provinces (L’Aquila, Frosinone and Isernia) and 24 municipalities, which together make up the Park Community. In 2021, Unesco recognised the ancient beech forests in five nuclei within the park as a Natural World Heritage Site. In addition to nature within the territory and surrounding areas, there are several towns of ancient origin that make up portions of the original core of the Park, including Pescasseroli, Opi, Gioia dei Marsi, Lecce dei Marsi, Villavallelonga and Bisegna. These inhabited centres were devastated by the tragic Marsica earthquake of 13 January 1915. Following the expansion of the Park’s perimeter, many more villages were added, such as Civitella Alfedena, Villetta Barre (which became famous for the presence of deer and fallow deer in town), Scanno and Ortona dei Marsi. Outside the Park’s boundaries are



Pescina dei Marsi, the birthplace of Ignazio Silone and Cardinal Mazzarino, Castel di Sangro, Anversa degli Abruzzi and the charming Castrovalva, perched on a rugged rocky spur and immortalised by the artist M.C. Escher.

The Park can be reached by car from several directions: via the A25 Rome-Pescara motorway by exiting at the Pescina tollgate; from Rome and Naples, access is particularly impressive via Sora and Cassino respectively; from Pescara and Sulmona, access can be gained via the A25 motorway by exiting at the Cocullo tollgate and proceeding to Scanno and the lake of the same name, famous for its heart shape, crossing from Anversa degli Abruzzi through the narrow gorges of the Sagittario River along a tortuous road made challenging by the numerous unlit tunnels dug into the living rock, offering the timeless emotions of rugged wilderness.

One of the most frequently visited villages in the park is Pescasseroli. Here, a stopover at **Palazzo Sipari** is a must. The historic residence and birthplace of Benedetto Croce has belonged to the Sipari family since it was built at the end of the 18th century. In 2004, the last descendant, Marchesa Maria Cristina Monticelli Obizzi Sipari, daughter of the Hon. Erminio Sipari, founder of the Abruzzo Park, set up the Foundation that bears her parents' name. Since the death of the Marchioness in 2006, the Foundation has managed the Palazzo, which has become a museum-home, along with its appurtenances, including the former stables and the "Bear Courtyard" where young bears destined for the future wildlife enclosure were temporarily kept during the Park Authority's early days.

Discoveries continue by visiting the Church of Our Lady of Sorrows, also belonging to Palazzo Sipari, the Mill of St. Rocco, located a short distance from the Palazzo, and the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul.

Upon reaching Villetta Barrea, visitors may admire **Palazzo Graziani**, a historic residence still inhabited by the family of owners, and the interesting Transhumance Museum.

Scanno is definitely worth a visit to see its charming old town centre with houses that lean against each other, following the morphology of the place. Be sure not to miss the sumptuous **Di Rienzo family palace** and the numerous goldsmiths' workshops. Here, in the late 1950s, the famous photographer Mario Giacomelli took a series of black and white photographs of the locals. Visitors with a sweet tooth should drop in at the historic Pasticceria Di Masso, which invented the Pan dell'Orso, a soft sponge cake made with honey, chocolate and almonds named after the animal that symbolises this territory.

Setting out from Scanno, it takes less than 50 minutes to reach Castel di Sangro, one of the largest towns in the area. Here it is possible to visit the **Palazzo de Petra**, which belonged to the de Petra family. This historic residence is now the seat of the civic museum housing the collection of the painter born in Castel di Sangro, Teofilo Patini. Just a few minutes from the Patini Painting Gallery, lovers of haute cuisine make a point of dining at the Ristorante Reale, located in a former convent. This gastronomic temple run by chef and owner Niko Romito has no fewer than three Michelin stars.

Just outside the geographical boundaries of the park, there is a small town of incredible beauty. It is Santo Stefano di Sessanio, a medieval village built under the De' Medici family. Thanks to the Sextantio entrepreneurial group and its visionary project, this village, which was completely abandoned until twenty years ago, has today become a stunning and exemplary European model of conservative restoration and of "borgo diffuso" hospitality services. Here, along with a variety of lovely shops, it is possible to visit the historic **Palazzo Ciarrocca**. A few minutes from Santo Stefano di Sessanio, there is **Rocca Calascio**, a magnificent castle dating back to the year 1000 that stands at a height of 1520 metres on the border of Campo Imperatore and dominates the southern slope of the Gran Sasso d'Italia. The breathtaking panorama has been used many times as the setting for national and international films.

USEFUL READING BEFORE YOUR TRIP

Recommended by Lodovico Vannicelli Casoni, vice president of ADSI Abruzzo

DIMORE STORICHE IN ABRUZZO – HISTORIC HOUSES IN ABRUZZO (Carsa, Pescara, 2023)

This 180-page work presents for the first time a selection of 41 dwellings affiliated with the Italian Historic Houses Association (ADSI) in larger and smaller towns throughout the Abruzzo region. It provides accurate historical and architectural descriptions while showing a rich iconography, with photographs of exteriors and interiors. Printed by Soc. Editrice Carsa of Pescara, this volume will be available in bookshops as of December 2023.

GUIDA ALLE MERAVIGLIE SCONOSCIUTE D'ABRUZZO – A GUIDE TO THE LESSER-KNOWN WONDERS OF ABRUZZO (di S. Ardito, Carsa, reprint 2020)

The first edition of the guidebook dates back to the 1990s. The third reprint offers an excursionist's slant on 72 destinations, variously divided between places of natural and scenic interest, ancient villages, archaeological sites, castles, hermitages, churches and sanctuaries, as well as interesting insights into cultural features to be found within the region's main urban centres.

RELAZIONE SIPARI – THE SIPARI REPORT

(Ente autonomo del Parco nazionale d'Abruzzo, 1926; reprint 2020 Ediz. del Parco)
This interesting historical document was written by Erminio Sipari, the founder and first president of the Autonomous Abruzzo National Park Authority.

Below: Camosciara (photo by Valentino Mastrella) and Palazzo Ciarrocca (photo by Carsa Edizioni)

Facing page, from top: the San Rocco Fountain in Pescasseroli and an interior of Palazzo Graziani (photo by Carsa Edizioni)
Large picture, Palazzo de Petra (photo by Carsa Edizioni)





Stazzo Lu Ciaccaru today
The property is located in Arzachena

FROM COUNTRY HOUSE TO RESORT. THE REBIRTH OF THE *STAZZI*

Built for shepherds and farmers, these once abandoned settlements have now been renovated to offer visitors an alternative to crowded seaside resorts. It's happening in Gallura, a stone's throw from the Emerald Coast

by **ANDREA GUOLO**

Something that is going on in Sardinia is similar to what has already happened in other places such as Tuscany, where villages abandoned after World War II have been rediscovered and repurposed, now attracting visitors from all over the world. In the case of Gallura where this phenomenon began, the object of rediscovery is called a *stazzo*. But what exactly are *stazzi*? “They are rural settlements,” says **Michele Ruda di San Lorenzo**, president of ADSI Sardinia, “and they are found in various areas to the north of the island, particularly in Gallura, and also in Corsica. They used to house communities dedicated to sheep-farming and agriculture. Then the transformation of society and the abandonment of the countryside caused them to fall into disuse—until several entrepreneurial initiatives saw the opportunity to restore them for hospitality, bringing them back to their original splendour yet on a much higher level in terms of comfort and services. It seems that these forms of agricultural societies were introduced in Gallura by the Corsican population who fled their island for various reasons, often due to the existence of harsh family feuds. The *stazzi*, the centre of community life, were isolated country houses equipped with every necessity, including places of worship. Today, those that have stood the test of time represent true historic dwellings not of noble but of peasant origin. Two exemplars that recently joined the Italian Historic Houses Association are Stazzo Lu Ciaccaru in Arzachena and Gallicantu Stazzo Retreat in Luogosanto. People familiar with Gallura cannot fail to notice the strategic location of these structures, which are also quite close to each other, about 15 minutes by car. They are rural dwellings with easy access to some of Sardinia's most beautiful beaches, including those of the Costa Smeralda. **Stazzo Lu Ciaccaru** is the forerunner to these stories of rebirth. “The *stazzo* dates back to the mid-19th century. It always remained in my family's ownership, yet it had been in a state of neglect since the 1960s. Then my mother, who wanted to create an alternative to her profession as a lawyer, decided to revitalise it and turn it into a hotel.” Today Niccolò Pesci, the son



of Geraldina Giovannoni (the Florentine lawyer who carried out the transformation), works alongside his mother in looking after the structure that has grown year by year to become one of the jewels of Gallura hospitality. It reopened as a resort in 2007. Since then, new rooms, independent villas with a swimming pool, a massage area and gym have been added, and now more suites with private pool, sauna and hammam are on the way. The beaches of Capriccioli, Romazzino and Pevero are a ten-minute drive away. Here, however, it is another world amid the peace and quiet of a facility that has 32 hectares of hills and English-style lawns, centuries-old olive trees, aromatic essences and fruit trees. “Visitors genuinely appreciate our tranquillity. Many are tired of the chaos of seaside resorts and so they take refuge here, where they find an oasis of silence and relaxation. We give them comfortable, spacious rooms not far from the sea. They experience nature in silence and listen to the song of crickets and cicadas in the evening.” Days are spent between the swimming pool, beauty treatments, and relaxing time to read in the garden. Completing the quality services found here are the Ristorante La Ciminea entrusted to chef Gianfranco Mameli, a connoisseur of local ingredients (be sure to try the stuffed pasta or egg pasta with kid rennet), and the cocktail bar set up on a covered terrace overlooking the hills of the resort.

Luogosanto—literally “Holy Place”—is a big name for a small municipality to live up to. It is home to fewer than two thousand inhabitants, yet it reflects the history of this Gallura locality. Here there are no less than twenty-two churches and a hermitage, the Eremo of San Trano, where the relics of the anchorite saints Nicholas and Trano were found in a cave. In the centre of an area characterised by four locations of great historical importance (the palace of Baldu, the castle of Balaiana, the hermitage of San Trano and the hill of Monti Ghjuanni, site of the so-called “meeting cabin” where the wise men of the time would sit around the hearth and make decisions for the community) there stands **Gallicantu**, the stazzo transformed into a “retreat” by **Marco Maria Berio**, former pro and manager of the Pevero Golf Club for 12 years, and **Raffaella Manca**, communications expert and co-founder of the CoastPr agency. “We bought it six years ago, in 2017. The stazzo and the whole property

were overgrown with grass and covered in all kinds of rubbish. After four years of reclamation and renovation work, we opened it to the public in May 2022,” says Marco Maria Berio. The project to transform the former rural settlement into a guesthouse with five rooms and two suites was entrusted to architect Jean Claude Lesuisse. All around are more than three hectares of Mediterranean scrub and anthropomorphically shaped granite. The renovation is truly admirable and the owners have proved rich in inspiration and imagination. The 19th-century “conca fraicata” stone formation has become a shop selling local products; an ancient cave is used as a space for tasting the great wines of the area and for sampling cold meats and cheeses produced in nearby stazzi; the cocktail bar has been created using a natural rock wall. “Throughout the Gallicantu forest,” Berio reveals, “there are traces of caverns and small caves that have been used over the centuries as shelters for humans and animals. The ‘Guardian’ of Gallicantu is a five-metre high granite formation in the shape of a skull. The King of Gallicantu is an 800-year-old wild olive tree, the Queen a 300-year-old cork tree.” Nature’s magic is thus entrusted to people who have faced the challenges of reclamation with an ethical sense and with respect for the history of the place. And the evening lights help instil a fairy-tale atmosphere in Gallicantu, like an idealised dream drawn by a child. At breakfast, territorial consistency reigns: do not ask for cooked ham because it has never been produced in Sardinia. Instead, all the ingredients mirror Gallicantu. The programme of activities, for those not tempted by the quiet of the pool set amid the shade of olive trees, includes cooking classes, watercolour courses, golf lessons with Marco as coach, massages, yoga, and workshops on primitive ceramics.

“The repurposing of the stazzi as hospitality structures is consistent with their history,” concludes the president of ADSI Sardinia. “In this way, we see the continuation of the community life that has always characterised the spirit of these places. A simple, authentic, genuine beauty that has not been distorted at all.”

In the photos: the swimming pool and garden of Gallicantu in Luogosanto

Facing page: three images of Stazzo Lu Ciaccaru and, in the large photo, Ancient Chamber at Gallicantu



AT KNEBWORTH, ROCK COMES TO THE PALACE

Martha Lytton Cobbold, the first woman to serve as president of the British association Historic Houses, runs the company in charge of the famous English residence Knebworth House and Estate. Here memorable concerts are organised with a capacity of up to 125,000 spectators.

by ANDREA GUOLO

In 2020, Martha Lytton Cobbold became the first woman to chair Historic Houses, the benchmark association for historic British homes. Born in Alabama, with a degree from New York University in art history and journalism, married to Henry Lytton Cobbold and the mother of two children, she heads the administration of the family estate that music fans have come to love with special affection. The word itself says it all for those in the know: Knebworth. The biggest names in international the world of rock and pop have performed on its grounds, giving concerts that have made history. But Knebworth House and Estate, like most British mansions, is also much more than what meets the eye. A fundamental part of the British economy revolves around such properties. Opening them to the public – in this regard, the United Kingdom has set an example for the world – represents both a way of collecting resources for conservation and a means of supporting the local community, as the president of Historic Houses tells us in this interview.

As Historic Houses, how many residences do you represent in Britain and what mission do you pursue?

Our association has over fourteen-hundred members, representing the vast majority of the highly protected, independently owned, mansions, castles and gardens in the UK. Since we were founded exactly fifty years ago in 1973, we have had three primary purposes. First, we provide a voice for our members, advocating their interests and engaging with governments, law-makers, regulators and other people with influence. We are a reminder to those in power – and to the public at large – that our heritage is best cared for by dedicated, passionate, private and independent owners. If this model is to be sustainable, however, the efforts that owners make to maintain their houses and gardens – especially through diversified commercial activity, from visits to weddings, filming to accommodation – need to be supported in the right way. Second, we provide technical advice to our members on topics as wide-ranging as pest control, insurance, conservation and outreach. Third, we help raise the profile of our member places and, where they are open for day visitors, encourage people to explore them. We are assisted in that by our 70,000-plus “visitor members” who make a vital contribution to all aspects of our work, and in turn enjoy free entry to several hundred of our member places that operate as visitor attractions.

What is the potential for incomings among Historic Houses in the UK and what are the main difficulties?

Our member places have many existing strengths as well as the potential to create much more social benefit. They are major employers, especially in rural areas where jobs can be hard to find. They mean a lot to their local communities – bringing together people who live nearby through activities and events, while also drawing in visitors from further afield who contribute

to the local economy. They are places of exploration, learning and fun for people of all ages, and help create wellbeing and reduce stress by providing beautiful, peaceful surroundings. Increasingly, our member places are finding innovative and exciting ways to tackle climate change, reduce their impact on the environment, and restore and revitalise habitats and ecosystems. The potential there is huge, but as with a lot of the entrepreneurial commercial activity that helps pay for the upkeep of these special places, heritage and planning regulations increasingly need to adapt, recognising important new priorities and the opportunity to do things differently. That's especially true if they are to remain suitable to be lived in as family homes, which is their lifeblood and what makes them so special. Our houses and gardens have always evolved – that's how they have survived the centuries. They must be allowed to continue to do so.

Are there already concrete plans to create a circuit for visitors to historic houses in your country? Who are the main stakeholders involved or soon to be involved in developing such a circuit?

We're lucky in the UK to have such a wealth of heritage in terms of historic houses and gardens. Literally hundreds of our member places welcome visitors – almost thirty million last year, more even than those who visit sites in the care of the state or the National Trust. This market has created, as you would expect, a vibrant industry of local and national guidebooks, websites, tour companies, and recommendations. I would suggest getting a Historic Houses membership and coordinating a visit in the late Spring or Summer, as most of our members are open at that time of year and the British gardens are entering their most colourful phase. You would need itineraries for different regions, as Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are unique and stunning in their own rights.



Crowd in the park at Knebworth

Opening photo: Martha Lytton Cobbold portrayed at the mansion by Vicki Couchman



The rooms of the mansion and the park crowded during a concert (photo courtesy: Knebworth House)

England, too, requires many visits to enjoy its bounty. Our website lists the Historic Houses member places you can explore – most of them free to our “visitor members” – but those attractions are featured in scores of other publications and included in other itineraries on a regular basis. It’s the sheer number of places you can see and their diversity that make exploring the UK such fun – whether on your own, or following the advice of your travel agent or a tourist information organisation.

In your opinion, what are the winning projects that have been carried out by your associates?

Happily, it’s not my opinion alone that matters! We have literal winners, every year – places that win or are shortlisted for our awards, chosen by the public or panels of expert judges. We now recognise and celebrate the efforts of our owners and custodians in five different ways. The Garden of the Year is the public’s favourite, chosen by a poll every summer. Our Restoration Award shines the spotlight on amazing projects of restoration or reuse that have been completed in the preceding twelve months – though most have taken many years. In 2016 we created an Education Award in honour of a late member of our staff team, Frances Garnham, who was passionate about the role of historic houses and gardens in inspiring the young and reaching out to new audiences. And in the last few of years, we have established a Sustainability Award to showcase the environmental efforts of our member places, and a Collections Award, honouring the curators, custodians and conservators who look after the contents that are just as important a part of our heritage as the buildings they can be found in. We make videos to bring the stories of each of our award winners

to life. I would encourage your readers to watch them at historichouses.org/awards.

How would you describe your house at Knebworth? How did the idea of opening your own home to the public come about?

Knebworth House and Estate is a much-loved family home. It’s a Tudor house with Victorian High Gothic alterations, and we are the 19th generation to live here. It’s been open for visitors for well over a hundred years, but on a commercial basis only since the early 1970s when my parents-in-law opened it regularly to try and save it from disrepair, following generations of high taxation and necessary sales of land, chattels and ancillary properties. It’s a joy to open and share it. We embrace the opportunity, and we are open on school holidays and weekends from March through September, taking group bookings and events throughout the year.

How do you use Knebworth House today in terms of incomings and hospitality? Did success come immediately or did it require patience?

Knebworth must work hard for itself. We are a long way from completing essential structural repair and we use the house, gardens and estate for many commercial purposes. In the 1970s, success was immediate as it was quite novel then, but repairs and maintenance were urgent and many lessons have been learned hands-on while running the business. I personally am



Above: Knebworth House and Estate as seen from the gardens

risk-averse, and so I run the companies conservatively but with strong drive and determination. All profits are put back into the property. The Liam Gallagher concerts in 2022 enabled restoration of two turrets and three chimneys. He seemed pleased when he returned for a photo shoot and I was able to show him what had been accomplished!

How many people work at Knebworth House today and what events do you currently organise?

We are a small family-run business. I head our companies and the daily operations, with a full-time team of 15 between the office, garden and maintenance personnel. We have a team of 120 occasional staff to assist during special events. We host weddings, conferences, film location work, car and craft shows, concerts with up to 125,000 in attendance (celebrating 50 years next year), theatricals, education visits and much more.

Knebworth Park is famous for hosting concerts that have gone down in history, for example the last Queen concert with Freddie Mercury on stage. What do you think was the most important event among those you have hosted and organised?

We are an ideal venue for concerts, with a natural amphitheatre in our field and access from the motorway. It’s an iconic venue for artists. We love hosting the events, and work closely with the authorities to ensure that everything goes smoothly. We

are happy to have small events for a few hundred up to our maximum licenced capacity of 125,000 people. The Robbie Williams events, hosting 375,000 over three days, was a record-breaker. Personally, I loved having the Red Hot Chili Peppers here!

What would you like to advise owners of residences in Italy who are increasingly oriented towards opening up to the public?

It can be very rewarding. It can prove helpful financially while also increasing engagement with the local and broader community. I would strongly recommend engaging with others within the European and UK Historic Houses associations, to learn about what works and what doesn’t, to ensure understanding and adherence to legislation and establish support. It’s worthwhile to apply as broad an approach as feasible, for things always happen in relation to the economy, transport links and more.

What is your favourite historic home in Italy?

Italy is a favourite destination and I love every region, house and garden I visited in Tuscany as a student, along the Amalfi coast during my honeymoon, and on many family trips since then. Choosing one is difficult, but I’ll say the Castello Sonnino in Montespertoli, a beautiful family-run estate with wonderful wine and hospitality.



The castle and gardens of Villandry
Photo by G.Mourain

TO VILLANDRY, THE BIRTHPLACE OF HOSPITALITY AMONG HISTORIC HOUSES

Discovering with Henri Carvallo the French palace that first opened to the public in 1908 and welcomed 360,000 visitors last year

by **Silvia Manzoni**



Even before travellers' gazes linger on the Renaissance silhouette of the **Château de Villandry**, their eyes are captured by the harmony of its gardens. Tulips, begonias and roses, the sinuous curves of box trees: the flowerbeds become natural *tableaux vivants*. These green spaces are the pride of the aristocratic residence, a majestic red carpet, a prelude to an experience sure to remain deeply rooted in memory. "The best compliment visitors can give me is to tell me that they leave here happy and feel they have had a joyful time, far from everyday life," says **Henri Carvallo**, owner of the castle where he has lived since childhood.

Villandry has belonged to his family since December 1906, when the visionary medical researcher Joachim Carvallo and his wife, also a scientist, the American Ann Coleman, bought the magnificent property in order to give visibility to the collection of Spanish paintings the couple had hitherto housed in their Paris flat. Little did they know that this purchase would mark a turning point. In time, the opening of the château to outside visitors gave Joachim the idea of founding an association, **La Demeure Historique**, thereby inaugurating a new chapter in the history of cultural tourism by making private architectural heritage available to the public.

But let us proceed step by step. Villandry welcomed its first guests in 1908, after a two-year renovation project to restore it to its original Renaissance style. "At that time, the gardens had not yet been laid out," Henri explains. But the new owner had already begun to think about how to equip the château with a park in harmony with its 16th-century architecture, drawing ideas from literary sources such as *Les Plus Excellents Bâtiments de France*.

"Later, the gardens opened in 1920 and the public became more numerous. This success gave him the idea in 1924 to found an association. My great-grandfather had begun to make himself known to his neighbours, almost all of whom were members of the aristocratic world to which he did not belong. He was very persuasive and did not take long

to convince other owners to join the project. The association *La Demeure Historique* put down roots and became the privileged interlocutor with the public authorities for all legal or fiscal matters related to private historical monuments. It also created a special stamp for the most visited châteaux, the sale of which made it possible to finance the restoration of the more modest ones. A true solidarity strategy aimed at the future.”

The estate and the gardens occupied all of Joachim’s time. Having abandoned the scientific world, he devoted himself entirely to his association, helping it expand and spreading its philosophy throughout the country. “He travelled around France and organised press conferences to announce new openings to the public, and he created specific itineraries for each region, which were then integrated into the general map of the castles of France. He was tireless in promoting the initiative.”

La Demeure Historique grew, as did the gardens of Villandry. Arranged on four terraces, five gardens were initially created, each endowed with its own identity and individual aesthetic. Even today they require the attention of ten permanent gardeners. Designed as an extension of the reception halls, the *Jardins d’Ornement* arouse astonishment with their tall box trees and floral arrangements. Vegetables and aromatic and medicinal herbs hark back to monastic-style gardens in the *Jardin des Simples* and in the *Potager Décoratif*, where vegetables are planted checker-board-style. Next to a pool of water lies the *Jardin d’Eau*, which invites one to take a meditative walk. Finally, the Labyrinth takes the form of a path between hedges that unfailingly creates amusement for young visitors. In 2008, eighty-five years after the completion of work on the original five gardens, a sixth was added at Henri’s request. The landscape architects in charge of the project, Louis Benech and Alix de Saint-Venant, were inspired by a drawing by Joachim himself. Arranged in fascinating disorder, the plants delineate three universes: the Cloud Chamber with its grassy paths, the Sun Chamber with orange hues and the Children’s Chamber, a play area for younger visitors. Not to mention that Villandry also has one of the rare grass tennis courts in France, renovated in 2010 in the style of Wimbledon.

“These areas are the scene of numerous animations, in summer as well as in winter. We decorate the castle and gardens for Christmas, organise firework evenings and theatre events.



From top: dining room (photo by D.Darrault) and one of the rooms (Frederic Paillet), view of the château (G.Mourain) and the kitchens (F.Paillet)

Facing page: portrait of Henri Carvallo (F. Paillet), the historic gardens (G.Mourain) and a salon with a fireplace (F.Paillet)



The public has increased greatly and become more diverse. In 2022, we welcomed 360,000 visitors, more than 35 per cent of whom came from abroad. Among the foreigners, there are Europeans (Italians are numerous), as well as Americans and Asians; they all appreciate the cultural activities we propose. In Villandry, no less than three exhibitions are held each year, alongside my great-grandfather’s painting collection, which is always has pride of place.” This year, by virtue of a partnership with Tuscany, Villandry hosted an exhibition on the monuments of the Italian region, while a similar exhibition devoted to the châteaux of the Loire has started in Italy. “There are very strong commonalities between the Loire and Tuscany: not only Renaissance art, but also the spirit of Leonardo, who lived in Amboise during his final years.”

And the association, *La Demeure Historique*? “It has 3000 members today. Most private châteaux are members. It is highly appreciated for the practical advice it gives its owners and continues to act as a spokesperson with the authorities to defend the specific needs of these historic architectural structures. Ninety-five per cent of the member castles are still inhabited by their owners.”

La Demeure Historique is preparing to celebrate its 100th anniversary next year. On the agenda are a series of events to be staggered throughout 2024, culminating in a big celebration on 31 May in Villandry. And to recount the epic story of its exuberant founder, a book will be published, allowing the general public to learn about the fascinating yet little-known story of Joachim and his wife Ann.



ITALIAN HISTORIC HOUSES

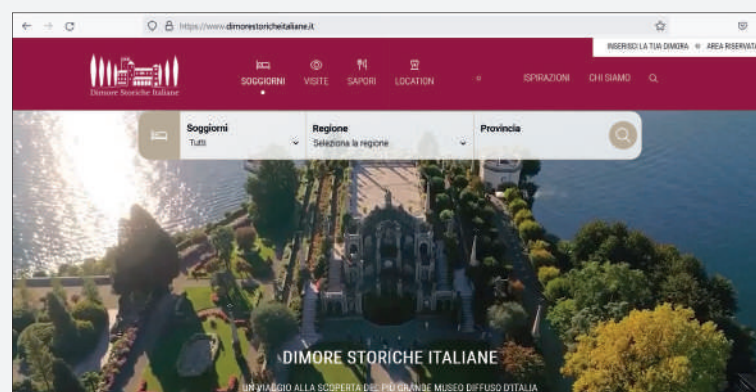
A journey to discover the most broadly spread out museum in Italy

“**Italian Historic Houses**” is a project under the auspices of ADSI Consulenze e Servizi SRL (a single-shareholder company owned by the Associazione Dimore Storiche Italiane, A.D.S.I.). All residences appearing on the site are owned by members of the Italian Historic Houses Association. The project stems from the desire to create an online platform for the promotion of historic monumental Italian real estate in synergy with the cultural excellence of the country. For almost four decades, the Italian Historic Houses Association has been actively involved in the enhancement and protection of Italy’s private monumental real estate. With this goal in mind, intense nationwide activity has been launched through itineraries dedicated to the discovery of these architectural treasures, which are the natural repositories of important artistic and historical artifacts, traditions, identity and culture. It is also thanks to historic houses that the ancient professions of craftsmen remain in existence.

Through the portal, you have the opportunity to discover extraordinary places and gain access to **cultural journeys** which, thanks to experts from the Italian cultural scene,

let you relive the atmosphere and emotions of the **Grand Tour of the 1700s**. From **Venetian Palladian Villas** to the **Castles of Sicily**, from **Tuscan villages** to the **ancient fortified farm estates of Puglia**—an odyssey through time to discover the manifold identities of Italian cultural through direct experience in diverse parts of the nation. Explore not only the historic houses of the most famous Italian cities but also other hidden pearls scattered throughout the peninsula, unknown to the general public but of absolute importance and beauty. Here, where nature blends with art and traditions, the character that makes this country unique, largely undiscovered, sings through. In numerous houses it is still possible to get to know firsthand the world of Italian **oenogastronomy** which, replete **with fine wines, unspoiled landscapes and crenellated towers**, allow visitors to savour history and share in the delights of Italy.

All properties included are subject to Ministerial Constraints pursuant to Legislative Decree 42/2004 (formerly Law 1089/39) and have been evaluated and approved by the Italian Historic Houses Association.



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LE IMPAVIDE DEL SUD Fearless Women of the South RICCARDO RICCARDI Edizioni Les Flâneurs – 2023

Bari-based essayist and journalist Riccardo Riccardi, author of “Puglia, Viaggio nelle dimore storiche” (Apulia, Journey through Historic Dwellings), has dedicated his latest book to the women who changed the history of Southern Italy. Revolutionary, unshakeable and courageous women who broke taboos and rules, overturned customs despite living far from the more developed lands of the North. Brave, determined and non-conformist women who fought to realise

dreams, pursue ideas and principles, affirm their sexuality and personality. Women who, through their individual experiences, left their mark on the literary, poetic, artistic, professional, political and religious world. They faced challenges unthinkable for their times and fought in favour of ideals for which they sacrificed themselves. Above all, they blazed unprecedented paths, creating the basis for a more aware, independent and free female consciousness. Many of these figures have not received the historical attention they deserve. This book, therefore, without claiming to be exhaustive, fills a gap in our memory, drawing attention to the role of women in the social and civil growth of Southern Italy.



GUIDA DELLE MURA DI ROMA Guide to the Walls of Rome

ANTONELLA GALLITTO, SIMONETTA SERRA, VALENTINA VALERIO
Palombi Editori – 2023

The first and most comprehensive guide to the Walls of Rome to date. Four minutely described and richly illustrated itineraries of the Servian Walls erected to defend the oldest city and the Aurelian Walls to defend the Empire, of the Urbanian Walls defending the Janiculum Hill and the Vatican Walls erected to defend the Papacy. Centuries later, the extraordinarily well-preserved Walls of Rome still form a single, solid, splendid

wall. A mighty and effective war machine designed for defence, but at the same time a precious crown that encircles the city and bestows majesty, beauty and decorum with its monumental stature. “Guide to the Walls of Rome” helps the reader decipher material traces in order to reconstruct the monument’s millenary history in a single, long, complex and surprising story. Four defensive walls, four epochs and a single place to protect are described in these pages through itineraries, thematic in-depth studies and a rich iconographic heritage of drawings, lithographs, watercolours, historical and recent photographs taken from the archives of the Capitoline Superintendency.



THE WORLD'S MOST BEAUTIFUL LIBRARIES MASSIMO LISTRI Taschen – 2023 (40th edition)

Launched in 2018 by Massimo Listri, a world-renowned photographer and author of more than 80 books in his career, this volume has enjoyed great success, as demonstrated by Taschen’s decision to release the 40th edition. It is an enthusiastic autobiographical journey in which Listri visits some of the oldest and most valuable libraries to celebrate their architectural and historical splendour in a cultural-historical pilgrimage into the heart of our halls of knowledge and

the stories they tell. Libraries were visited in twelve European countries and four on the American continent (United States, Mexico, Brazil and Peru). The book is available in English, French and German. Born in 1953, the author started his career in photography when very young. By the age of 17, he was already working for art and architecture magazines. With the publisher Franco Maria Ricci, he had the opportunity to produce his first major reportages with FMR magazine, for more than 20 years the main vehicle for Massimo Listri’s photographic tributes to the most beautiful palaces and interiors and the most extraordinary villas and architectural works of all time.

Associazione Dimore Storiche Italiane— Italian Historic Houses Association

OUR COMMITMENT TO THE CONSERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF AN ITALIAN LEGACY

The Italian Historic Houses Association (A.D.S.I.) brings together the owners of historic properties from all over Italy, for they represent an important component of our cultural heritage. Historic houses are cultural assets of significant historical and artistic interest, “subject to constraints,” and therefore protected by the State, which must favour their conservation, and are entrusted to the responsibility of the owners. It is a vast and heterogeneous heritage: houses and palaces, villas and castles, as well as gardens and agricultural estates. They are distributed throughout the nation and, in almost 80% percent of the cases, are located in the countryside or in the province. Each of these assets has a precise identity, unique in Europe, in terms of its individual history, its cultural value and close ties to the territory where it is located.

However, the serious difficulties entailed in the maintenance of these assets are also extraordinary, and the owners, in their role as custodians, must face such challenges every day. Yet these assets, if well-maintained and well-managed, can make an important contribution to the cultural, social and economic life of the communities where they are located. To achieve this result, the Italian Historic Houses Association, with its 4,500 members, is constantly

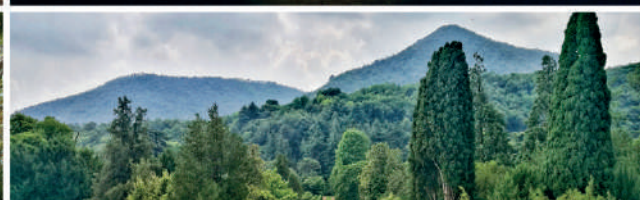
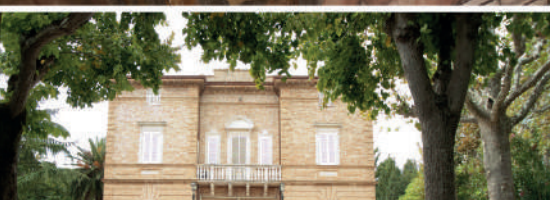
committed, together with the European Historic Houses Association (EHH), to promoting the protection and enhancement of historic homes.

The commitment of A.D.S.I. is therefore devoted to ongoing work in several directions:

- towards the Members who own the assets, to whom it provides legal, administrative, tax and technical advice and assistance regarding the management of the houses;
- towards national and local institutions, towards public and private bodies with which it collaborates in planning interventions, including those of a legislative nature, most suitable to the conservation and enhancement of listed properties in Italy, also in terms of tourism;
- towards the school and university system, to promote knowledge among young people of the opportunities offered by the protection and promotion of these resources. The historic houses, in fact, cannot be relocated, and they create precious job opportunities in the territories where they are located;
- towards public opinion and the media, to promote knowledge of such a significant part of our cultural heritage.

ADSI

Associazione Dimore Storiche Italiane



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ADSI | Three-year period 2022/2025

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