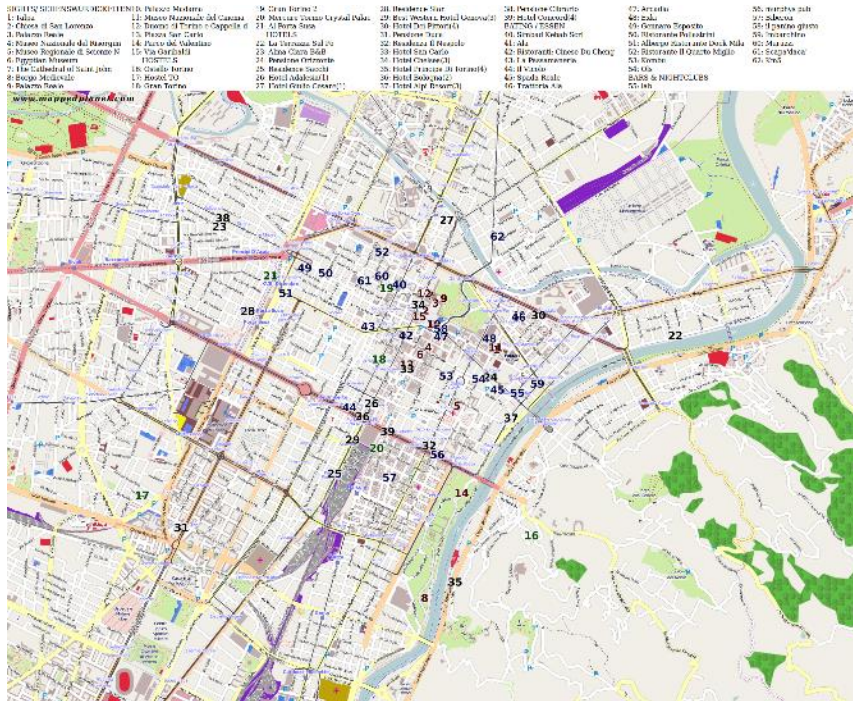


TURINO, VENICE AND SAN MARINO, A VISIT IN September 2021

A friend from the U.S. who loves Italy and has spent way more time there than I, had to cancel the trip we had planned for September. So, instead of multiple smaller destinations by bus, I reduced the scope of the trip to Turin, where I had never been, and Venice where I had been for two days just after 9/11. A Paris friend was interested in each destination so it worked out well in the end.

Turin is an easy 4-hour fast train (TGV) trip from Paris. Although generally known as Fiat’s headquarters and for industry generally, it turns out to be a lovely, multi-faceted destination with views to the Alps.



We based in Hotel Residence Torino Centro near the Porta Susa train station (the room was gigantic with large traditional Italian furnishings) and from there had excellent access by trams, metro and buses to all parts of the city. People told us the public transport system had been vastly improved when Turin hosted the winter Olympics in 2006. The only disappointment was that it was before the orchestra

and opera season had begun.

Cities situated along rivers have a special appeal for me, and Turin’s Po riverfront is beautifully accessible, especially the Valentino Park with its botanical garden and Borgo Medievale, a complex of buildings built for the Italian exhibition of 1884, recreating life in the Middle Ages.



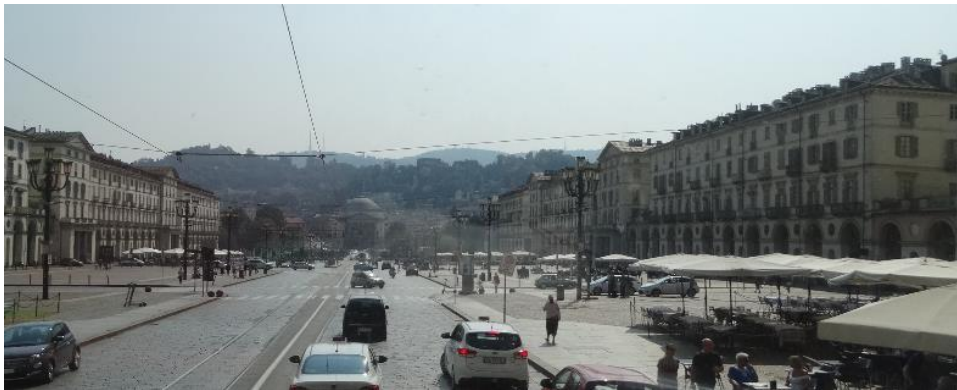
At 400 miles, the Po is the longest river in Italy. Across from the city center elegant houses



climb up one of the hills, including the art nouveau one where Deep Throat was filmed. Nearby is the lovely arched Pont Isabella. A hop on hop off bus provided a great tour of the central city. We, unfortunately, had quite a bit of haze during our visit which impeded our views.



The largest plaza in town, Vittorio Veneto, is also the largest Baroque Plaza in Europe. By 5 pm it transforms with seemingly a thousand patrons partaking of Turin's famous invention – the aperitivo. Here you either buy your apertif and are served some small complimentary snacks, or you order some small plates and receive your beverage at a hefty discount. For me, this was a great way to have dinner after a day of touring, and to absorb the energy of the Italian conversations surrounding us. Interestingly, the plaza imperceptibly slopes 7 meters from the Plaza Castello and fort to the river.



The main street has had an arcaded, covered, sidewalk since the 1500's, so that the noblesse was not affected by the elements.

I found the architecture in the central part of town very attractive.





Turin is a low-rise city so the Intesa Sanpaolo tower by Renzo Piano near our train station definitely stood out. Described by the architect as a “bioclimatic building”, being naturally ventilated and cooled, with a substantial amount of its power requirement generated from photovoltaic panels that cover the southern façade, it is 'similar' in that regard to the same architect's recent Cité de Justice in Paris which I view from my apartment. A new Piedmont regional government headquarters building four stories higher has been topped out but isn't slated for occupancy until December 2022 and isn't located in the center. It can be seen in the distance at the left in my first river photo.



The Duomo (Cathedral), built from 1491 to '98, the only Renaissance architecture in Turin, is the repository of the Holy Shroud in which Jesus was believed to have been wrapped after his crucifixion.



Because of that, the city attracts many religious pilgrims. Other prominent Catholic religious figures are buried there and there is a special seating area for members of the Savoy royal family which made Turin its capital in 1536. The Duomo is adjacent to the Castello Plaza

surrounding which are located the fort, the opera, and many of the city's fine museums; but there are so many museums, they are quite scattered around the center of town.



A landmark one is the national cinema museum built originally in the 1880's as a synagogue but never used. It then housed the Risorgimento (Unification of Italy) Museum from 1908 to 1938, now housed in this handsome Palazzo Carignano, initially built for that family in 1679. In fact, the cinema museum remains the tallest building in Turino!







At the top of another significant hill is the Basilica Superga which is reached by a funicular railroad ride that reminded me of the one in Rio up to Christ the Redeemer Statue. The tombs of the House of Savoy are located here. We didn't wait for the viewing tour time, but rather enjoyed the beauty of the structure itself and the views over the city.



Immediately outside of town are beautiful forested areas with many hiking opportunities.



Food was a highlight in Turino, with creative cuisine, including at Gustiani, adjacent to our hotel. We lunched one day at the Pharmacia del Cambio, sister café to the adjacent famous restaurant. Some ladies were parading in period costumes.



One evening we decided we were in the mood for pizza and there was a cozy local pizzeria nearby our hotel. I ordered a pepperoni pizza and was surprised when it arrived meatless. It turns out I had ordered pepperoncini (red peppers) which, fortunately, I like. When I asked the server, she explained that pepperoni doesn't actually exist in Italy (my internet research confirmed that it was created in the U.S.).

After two full days of exploring, and just enjoying the peaceful leafy neighborhood streets and good food, we decided to hop a train to Milan for the day. An easy hour away by the high speed Frecciarossa train, I had never seen the impressive Duomo there.



The hop on hop off bus red line provided the opportunity for an overview of the central city. But, of course, it was too early in the year to experience La Scala.

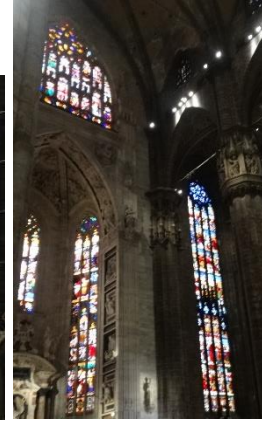
A magnificent shopping center, Galleria Vittorio Emmanuelle anchored the center of town and had all the usual lux brands. We treated ourselves to lunch at Rosso Catte (red cat) (veal chop with porcini's) and people watching. Its scale was massive, making our Paris Passages feel tiny (cozy?) by comparison. And Italy's Romulus and Remus are here as well.



Long distance trains and museums (which the Duomo is considered) required Italy's Green Pass, the equivalent of our Pass Sanitaire. Also, there is a dress code for the Duomo.

After St Peter's Basilica and the Seville Cathedral, Milan's Duomo is the third largest church in the world. The volumes exceeded even that of the recently-visited Cathedral in Cologne and the stained-glass windows were unique in my experience being entirely made up of rectangular sections. I am always amazed at how the exteriors of these stone structures can actually appear lacy!





There is a high-rise district developing in Milan, Porto Nuovo, which includes Solaria, the tallest residential high rise in Italy, and a pair of vegetated mid-rise residential towers. Known as Bosco Verticale, they house more than 900 trees, are self-sufficient in the use of solar energy and filtered waste water for the plants, and have won innumerable awards. I was also surprised to see my French bank, BNP Paribas on one of the towers, known as Torre Diamante and designed by the American architectural firm of Kohn, Pedersen and Fox.



The other notable feature of central Milan is Castello, a walled city begun in the 14<sup>th</sup> C and at one time or another under Spanish, Austrian or French rule, one of whose towers was built by Napoleon. Thus, it was always considered the enemy to Milanese. However, from the late



1800's to 1905 it underwent a complete restoration. It was difficult from the bus to obtain any adequate photos, so here are some stock ones.

After lunch we were able to take the blue line hop on hop off bus out to the Central Train Station, a handsome building from the early 1930's built to Mussolini's vision. I was surprised to see a Hudson News store in the station since I usually see it in Detroit's airport and had not realized that the company is such an international chain including the Dufry Duty Free stores.



The next leg of the trip was 4 ½ hours away by train from Turin to Venice. It took a while to figure out the vaporetto – which boats stopped where and by what routes - but fortunately, it is a great walking city and that was what I mostly did. I confess, I never sprang for a gondola ride, but took lots of photos!





I was here with another Paris friend and our modest hotel was in a 100% location next to Venice's prestigious Danieli Hotel on the Grand Canal. We were near enough to Plaza San Marco to enjoy a night cap every night to our orchestra of choice, but slept on a quiet alley.

My number one goal was to visit the Peggy Guggenheim Collection for which, fortunately, tickets were available on our first day. Peggy Guggenheim was a fan of and married to Max Ernst from 1942 to 1946. His work became a theme of my travels this fall, first with his presence in the Strasbourg Museum of Modern Art, followed by his museum in Bruhl Germany! Upon Guggenheim's return to Europe in 1947 she acquired the unfinished mid-18<sup>th</sup> C Palazzo Venier dei Leoni on the Grand Canal, which would be her home for the rest of her life. In 1970 she donated her home to the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation which now owns and



manages the collection which has works by all the major 20<sup>th</sup> C Modern artists. She is buried in the garden courtyard.



To get there we took a Traghetto, which is a "poor man's" gondola at €2 per crossing. Due to the stormy weather the canal was very rough. When it came time for me to climb out onto the dock, I had great difficulty balancing because the piling I was using to brace myself turned out to be wobbly!

Fortunately, the gondoliers finally realized my difficulty and between the two of them I was able to safely disembark. For which I happily gave them double the fare.



We focused our walking that day on the Dorsoduro and San Polo neighborhoods on the south side of the Grand Canal.



We stopped briefly in the Salute Church while waiting for our museum time slot.



And we "feasted" on the windows of gourmet foods, fashion and Venetian specialties.



As part of this year's Biennale I liked this exhibit from the Dominican Republic at the tiny Anglican St George's church.



The Frari Church with its Titian and Bellini and beautiful wooden choir from 1468 provided a feeling of tranquil sanctity.





We crossed Rialto Bridge (not mobbed with tourists on a rainy Thursday) and walked towards “home” finding an excellent fresh fish restaurant and topping the evening off with a nightcap and orchestra music on Plaza San Marco, as the rain had stopped!



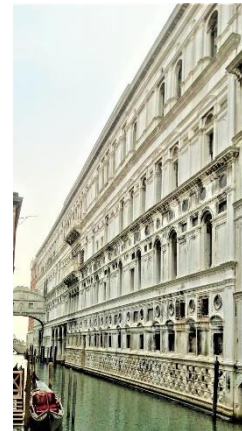
Walking a couple of neighborhoods each day was the objective, just to absorb atmosphere, and the local color of Venetians going about their daily business. Until the weekend there were virtually no tourists (Covid) so it was a “unique” Venice experience. We saw DHL and all other deliveries by boat or hand cart. And a different



sort of delivery.



Venice is seductive with its unique mix of oriental and western styles, known as Venetian Gothic, which in this visit was complemented by leisurely walks on the “back” canals where the challenge of maintaining buildings in this elevating-water-level environment was evident.



In general, the restaurants felt non-touristy and happy to be re-opened for business.



The next day our primary goal was St Mark's Cathedral followed by the Cannaregio neighborhood which includes both the old and new Jewish quarters. We watched in action the figures who have been

clanging the bells on the clock tower on St Mark's Square since 1499, and, although some restoration was in progress, we could appreciate the church's interior.



After indulging in all the gold mosaics of St Mark's we further indulged in huge ice cream sodas at Grand Café Lavena on St Mark's Square. An afternoon of walking was sorely needed after those!



Interestingly, we weren't in the mood to visit either the Correr Museum or the Doge's Palace with its golden statue. However, since our hotel was so close, we



passed the Bridge of Sighs often which is where the newly condemned returned courtrooms to prison. looking towards the Grand Canal.



from the palace This photo is taken tourists on the



Starting around 800 AD the island that contains the old Jewish quarter was a foundry (geto) and after the Doge restricted Jews to this area in 1516, the gates to which were locked every night, the word ghetto caught on across Europe as a term for any segregated neighborhood. In 1797 Napoleon ended the ghetto's isolation and in the 1860's the Italian republic granted Jews full citizenship. The entry is through a passage, the entire district felt like any neighborhood, including a current art show, except the buildings were a little taller at mostly 6 floors.



This sculpture is on one of the two holocaust memorials on the main square.

The Rialto Bridge area was full of tourists on Saturday, when we visited the fish and vegetable markets.



I also succumbed to temptation and bought three Murano glass rings. I had toured Murano on my prior visit. The canal was overflowing in some areas, but fortunately, we didn't encounter any deeper water on our walks which apparently often happens.

We had saved visits to San Zaccaria Church and Fondamenta Nuovo on the lagoon for that day to be off the main tourist route. The boats depart from F Nuovo for the beaches of Lido and



Murano and other islands. The Bellini triptych in San Zaccaria was painted when he was 75 years old. The central panel of Madonna and Child and Saints appears to be an extension of the church. The current church dates from the 15<sup>th</sup> C, but in the

9<sup>th</sup> C (before St Mark's) there was a stone church and convent here where the doges



worshipped. The remains of San Zaccaria (father of St John the Baptist) are located here.



We just missed visiting Sculio San Giorgio (they closed a half hour early), a supposedly delightful wood-paneled chapel decorated with the story of St George.

group leaving the and discovered the arrival wedding. Every woman

However, just then we saw what appeared to be a folklore adjacent alley, of guests for a was in a long



The attendants included young people dressed as courtiers. A stunning pair of shoes...and remember almost everyone climbed into and out of a boat to arrive!





In search of a specific recommended restaurant for dinner (which we never found) we walked all the Castello area to the Arsenale and naval museum. The neighborhoods were actually empty of pedestrians 6—8 pm Saturday evening! We could hear tv's going in the apartments and the occasional corner tavern had a few local patrons. A man was closing up his boat for the night.



The Arsenale is still a military base, so not open to the public. Its massive gate is guarded by stone lions.



Few places are quite as photogenic as Venice!



Since I was in Italy, I decided it was the opportunity to visit the Republic of San Marino, Europe's oldest republic, and the next to last country in Europe I haven't visited (Andorra remains). I took a train from Venice to Rimini on the Adriatic Coast, then a shuttle bus up to San Marino, the capital. And of course, up is the operative word. At 2424' on the slopes of Monte Titano, this walled capital of the 24 sq mile microstate (population ~





34,000) is on a protected promontory with views of all potential approaching danger. I didn't realize that the shuttle bus wasn't taking me up the final hundred meters of elevation so I was quite breathless when I arrived at my hotel. But, fortunate, because I just beat a major rainstorm which I then got to watch from my room. Later I caught the early evening sun glow for my exploration.



I never made it, however, to the very top where the 11<sup>th</sup> C fortification towers are located on three separate peaks. I took a long-distance photo from my bus and here are some stock photos. There is great hiking around these peaks.







San Marino has many museums, including Vampire, Medieval Weapons and Torture museums which make it a great family or school group day trip destination, both of which occurred during my Sunday/Monday visit. It became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2008. Duty free shopping is

another major tourist attraction.

Saint Marinus, a stonemason from the then-Roman island of Rab (in today's Croatia), was persecuted in Rimini for his Christian preaching and fled with his followers in 301 AD to found his community on the slopes of Mt. Titano.

According to Wikipedia "The government of San Marino made United States President Abraham Lincoln an honorary citizen. He wrote in reply, saying that the republic proved that 'government founded on republican principles is capable of being so administered as to be secure and enduring.' "

The St Francis Church and Convent was originally founded in 1361 and today contains many fine works of art including this 14<sup>th</sup> C wooden crucifix on the altar. This is its bell tower.



There are three levels of walls surrounding the capital, with handsome stone buildings.





Other monuments include this 1996 monument to Peace.



In addition to tourism (3 million visitors per year) there is some

industry and agriculture including grapes. So, I had a local red wine with my excellent dinner of a veal chop with porcini mushrooms.



I decided to spend the 5 Euros to purchase their elegant country entry stamp since I have a brand-new passport and this would be a beautiful first page for whatever travels are yet to come.



The 76 passport pages from 2012 onwards contain a lot of memories, most of which are documented on my website. I hope that there will be the chance to fill at least a few of the new pages!