



A TRIP TO THE CUNEO AREA BETWEEN ROYAL SAVOY RESIDENCES AND TREASURES IN THE SHADOW OF MONVISO

A daily itinerary through art and history in the Cuneo area.

We will set off to discover the Castle of Racconigi, a splendid Savoy residence that is a UNESCO heritage site, and will go on with a trip back to the Middle Ages, through the artistic and cultural treasures of the Saluzzo area, part of MAB Monviso.

Last but not least, the gastronomic excellence that is the hallmark of the entire Cuneo area will not be missing.

8.30 am: departure from Torino to **Racconigi**.

9.30 am: arrival in Racconigi and guided tour of the Royal Castle.

The Castello Reale of Racconigi was probably one of the favourite buildings of the Savoy family, a residence where the memory of a court life in which official institutional commitments were intertwined with the daily private life of its protagonists is still very much alive and tangible. Founded around the 11th century as a stronghold of the Marca di Torino, at the end of the 17th century the original fortified structure was completely redeveloped by the Savoy family. The northern facade, a striking example of Baroque style, was designed by Guarino Guarini. The mid-eighteenth-century renovation works were entrusted to architect Giambattista Borra, who transformed the southern facade, endowing it with a neoclassical style. He was responsible for the halls inspired by the myths of Hercules and Diana, while the Chinese apartments, full of oriental exoticism, date back to the 1770s.

Subsequently, the identity of the Castello di Racconigi can be linked to the figure of Carlo Alberto of Carignano, King of Sardinia in 1831. Carlo Alberto appointed Ernest Melano to transform the residence, while Pelagio Palagi was asked to design and direct the decoration of the interior spaces, in line with an eclectic nineteenth-century style. To Melano we owe the Cabinet of Apollo, the Gallery of Aeolus, and the precious and unique Etruscan Cabinet, which won an award at the London Exposition of 1851. Today the Castello Reale of Racconigi is a museum complex open to the public and one of the UNESCO properties included in the Residences of the Royal House of Savoy system in Piemonte. Carlo Alberto's style is also clearly visible in the majestic 170-hectare park connected to the castle. Originally designed in the 17th century according to the French taste by André Le Nôtre, it was then transformed at the end of the 18th century, succumbing to the charm of the English garden. It was modified by German landscape artist Xavier Kurten, called to Racconigi by Carlo Alberto, the former aligning it with the canons dear to Romanticism. Inside, Pelagio Palagi added the neo-Gothic structures of the Margarìe e delle Serre Reali complex, both a farm and a recreational place for the Savoy court. Reliving the carefree atmosphere of those royal holidays, visitors can spend the whole day there outdoors with children, family, or friends, in a romantic and evocative atmosphere. In the quiet of the park, they can enjoy restful walks and picnics in the shade of the ancient trees, a relaxing stop in the cafeteria set up in the Russian Dacia, a walk with man's best friend (who's more than welcome, provided he's on a leash) observing the majestic storks and the other protected species that inhabit the park.



11.00 am: transfer to **Staffarda**, guided tour of the Abbey.

The Abbazia di Santa Maria di Staffarda, one of the most important and fascinating medieval monasteries in Piedmont, stands alone in the beautiful Saluzzo plain, surrounded by the breathtaking valleys of Monviso. From 1750, with papal bull, the abbey became part of the historical-cultural heritage of the Mauritian Order of Turin.

The large complex of different buildings, originally much more grandiose, was founded around 1135 by the Cistercian monks in an uncultivated and treacherous land received as a gift from Marquis Manfredo I. The monks reclaimed 1,300 hectares of land and transformed it into a flourishing farm. The complex consists of the abbey itself, with a graceful square cloister surrounded by the sacristy, the chapter house, the refectory and the laboratory room; the dormitories of the monks and the lodgings of the lay brothers were located upstairs.

The cloister is the real heart of the monastery. Built in the 13th century, it has a square plan, surrounded by a portico marked by elegant arches divided into double columns. A place of seclusion and tranquility, it is immersed in silence and offered the monks an environment suitable for meditation, reflection and prayer.

The strict Rule of Saint Bernard upholds the absolute renunciation of sacred vestments and overly lavish decorations as an archetype of Cistercian thought. For this reason, the church has a linear and austere architecture, built with simple materials, such as stone and brick, left exposed.

The only exception is the majestic altarpiece dated 1531, attributed to Pascale Oddone. Grandiose and imposing, it has eight ovals containing statuettes, masterfully carved in polychrome wood, and painted with gold finishes.

12.30 pm: lunch at a typical restaurant.

2.15 pm: transfer to **Saluzzo**, guided tour of the town centre.

Saluzzo is known as the capital city of the ancient Marquisate that from 1470 to 1547 dominated southwestern Piedmont and succeeded in carving out a prestigious place among the great European kingdoms of the era. Even today in the beautiful historic centre, with an incredible medieval imprint, the traces of its noble heritage are visible and well-preserved.

The city is a succession of cobbled streets, walls covered with ivy and elegant noble villas with beautiful painted facades, over which Castiglia dominates, the ancient castle of the Marquises. The city hosts two exclusive museums, unique in Italy: the Museo della Civiltà Cavalleresca and the Museo della Memoria Carceraria. Also, in the medieval village you can visit the birthplace of Silvio Pellico, a writer, patriot and playwright born in Saluzzo in 1789.

Not far away, the Casa Cavassa, today a Museo Civico, is a supreme example of the Saluzzese Renaissance. The inside is decorated with precious antiques, the grisaille frescoes of the feats of Hercules, a work by the Flemish painter Hans Clemer, and the magnificent Madonna della Misericordia, with open arms to protect the Marquises and the Saluzzese court.

Strolling through the streets of the village with its charming antique atmosphere, walking along the lively pedestrian area, the heart of shopping, or sipping coffee in the elegant patios are authentic experiences, in a town that still has a human dimension. From June to October a succession of festivals, musical and cultural events makes a stop in the city even more satisfying.

From the ancient music of the Marchesato Opera Festival to the unmistakable rhythms of the Occit'Amo Festival, the choices are endless.

Saluzzo boasts a tradition and heritage of skills in the craft sector, in particular woodworking, with a history rooted in time. Every year START/Storia Arte a Saluzzo combines local traditions with contemporaneity, giving special consideration to the youngest.



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The food and wine heritage is of the highest level. In the restaurants you can enjoy recipes from typical Piedmontese cuisine, from appetizers to tasty first courses, Piedmontese beef and poultry, such as the typical white hen of Saluzzo, a Slow Food product, accompanied by Colline Saluzzesi DOC wines such as Rosso, Quagliano and Pelaverga.

7.30 pm: dinner in a typical restaurant.

11.00 pm: arrival in Torino.

*Fam Trip organized and offered by the Local Tourism Board of Cuneese
in partnership with local partner operators involved in the tour*

