Risorgimento-era Turin

Walking: 3.7 km, 56 min

Where Italy was born

Turin was not just the **first capital of Italy** (1861-1865): it was the **forge** where unification took shape. Here Cavour plotted in cafés, here the first Parliament passed the laws that brought the nation into being, and here the House of Savoy transformed a regional kingdom into a nation-state.

This itinerary takes you to the **places where Italy was born**: palaces where history was made, cafés where plots were hatched over ice cream, restaurants where Cavour watched the members of Parliament, and armouries that preserve the weapons of conquest. Ideal for anyone who loves history and the Risorgimento and wants to understand how a Piedmontese city became the birthplace of a nation.

Palazzo Carignano



Palazzo Carignano and the first Parliament: where Italy was made

What it is: A Baroque masterpiece designed by **Guarino Guarini** (1679), with its famous **undulating red-brick façade**. But Palazzo Carignano is more than just architecture: it is **the birthplace of the Italian nation**.

The Kingdom of Italy was proclaimed here and its **first Parliament** met here (1861-1865), in a temporary chamber built in the courtyard and later demolished. In the palace's elliptical hall, the Chamber of Deputies of the Subalpine Parliament (1848-1860) has been preserved intact. The palace also houses the hall that was meant to be the permanent home of the Chamber of Deputies (completed, however, in the year the capital moved to Rome and therefore never used): it is the impressive hall at the end of the visit.

Why it is special: Looking into the **Chamber of Deputies of the Subalpine Parliament**, left just as it was in 1860, is a moving experience. You can imagine the founding fathers of the nation at their benches, the fiery speeches, the historic votes and the dreams of a nation that did not yet exist.

Caffè Fiorio



The history: Founded in **1780**, Caffè Fiorio was the **salon of Turin’s aristocracy**, so conservative that it earned the nickname «caffè dei codini» (the pigtails café). Later, intellectuals, patriots and progressive aristocrats gathered here too. Above all, it was here that **Cavour** and his allies discussed, plotted and planned the future of Italy.

The legendary anecdote: It is said that **Carlo Alberto** (King of Sardinia and father of Vittorio Emanuele II) would regularly ask his advisers: **“What are they saying at Fiorio?”** to gauge the **mood of the people** and the elite. The café was the city’s political barometer.

Why it is special: Fiorio shows that **history was not made only in official palaces**, but also in cafés, salons and informal meeting places where ideas circulated freely. This is the Risorgimento “from below”, shaped by conversations, backroom alliances and networks of personal connections.

Ristorante Del Cambio



Ristorante Del Cambio: Cavour's table

The history: Opened in **1757** as a café and turned into a restaurant in the nineteenth century, Del Cambio is the oldest restaurant in Turin still in business. In the **nineteenth century**, it became the favourite restaurant of the leaders of the Risorgimento.

Cavour's table: Camillo Benso di Cavour had his own **reserved table** here (and it still exists!). The table was strategically positioned: **near the window** overlooking Piazza Carignano, with a direct view of **Palazzo Carignano** (the seat of Parliament).

An interesting detail: From that table, the story goes, Cavour **kept an eye on a window** of the palace opposite: a white handkerchief waved by his secretary let him know when his presence was required. It was a **political observation post** disguised as lunch.

Armeria reale



Palazzo Reale and the Armeria: the heart of Savoy power

What it is: Palazzo Reale was built in the seventeenth century as the residence of the dukes (later kings) of Savoy. For centuries it was the **political heart** of the Duchy of Savoy and the Kingdom of Sardinia and, from 1861 to 1865, of the Kingdom of Italy.

Its role in the Risorgimento: events held here included:

Official receptions to celebrate military victories

Gala balls celebrating Italian unification

Diplomatic audiences with foreign ambassadors

Treaty signings (the alliance with Napoleon III's France was signed in Turin by Victor Emmanuel II and Cavour in January 1859)

Why it is special: seeing the **armour of the House of Savoy**, Napoleon's sword from Marengo and the sabres presented to Victor Emmanuel II for the unification of Italy makes history tangible. They are not just museum exhibits: they are the tools with which the nation was built.

Plaques in Piazza Castello



The detail: On some buildings in Piazza Castello (especially on the side facing Via Po), you will find **stone plaques** and **commemorative tablets** marking events of the Risorgimento:

The proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy (17 March 1861)
The **departure of volunteers** for the wars of independence
The **triumphant returns** after victories

Why it is special: These hidden **details** are often overlooked by tourists, but they tell the story of how Turin **experienced the Risorgimento** not only in its seats of power, but also in its streets, squares and everyday life. Each plaque is a trace of the patriotic fervour that swept through the city.

When you book your stay with us you receive the complete step-by-step itinerary, with directions to get there and back and tips on what to see.