

Since the first café opened in 1748, the blend of migrants, coffee, culture and commerce has intensified.

MARITIME MIGHT

In the oceanic-sized Piazza Unità d'Italia – Europe's largest sea-facing piazza – among the flotilla of café chairs and newspaper readers outside the grand colonnade-swept Caffè degli Specchi, you might easily imagine yourself in Vienna. Coffee here comes as in the Austrian capital, served on a little silver tray with a bird's bath glass of water and slice of Viennese Sachertorte or lavered Hungarian Dobos Torte.

Trieste's fortunes rest with the sea and its strength as a commercial trading port, thanks to a deep water port which allows large ships to dock right inside the city, and its privileged centuries-old status as a 'Free Port' unhindered by protectionist rules on imports and exports, customs and taxes.

The Palazzo Stratti is a capsule of that history; its original owner was a Greek merchant who during tough times turned it over to Italy's largest insurance company, Trieste-based Assicurazioni Generali. Like its neighbours, the Palazzo del Lloyd Triestino, former headquarters of Italy's oldest shipping company, and the government palace, Palazzo della Luogotenenza, it grew fat on sea traffic.

Since the 18th century, coffee imports have underpinned Trieste's commercial riches, surpassing Venice as a Mediterranean traffic hub, as it welcomed coffee-laden ships from Ottoman ports and Egypt.

TRADITIONAL ROASTERS

Since the first café opened in 1748, the blend of migrants, coffee, culture and commerce has intensified. While mayor from 1993 and 2001, Riccardo Illy remade the city while fostering the family coffee business founded by his Hungarian grandfather in 1933.

Strolling narrow streets and canals, you will encounter dozens of cafés and their iconic homegrown brands. From Illy and Hausbrandt, established in 1892 with its little yellow and red swilling mocha pot man, to Segafredo Zanetti (managers of Caffè degli Specchi since 2012) and lesser known Primo Aroma and Planet Coffee, some 50 companies participate in percolating Trieste's coffee fame.



Urban Hotel Design

Contemporary art, a black leather lobby and milk-white room décor in an 18thcentury building make this a memorable stay. Rooms are from US\$117/night with a smorgasbord breakfast, www.urbanhotel.it

Hotel Residence L'Albero Nascosto

This is a cosy hotel in the cobblestoned old town with a café-bar and charming reading corner. The 10 rooms have mini kitchenettes, stone walls and sofas, costing from US\$110/night. www. alberonascosto.it

HOW TO GET THERE

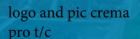
Fly Qantas or Emirates from Australian ports to Milan. Trieste is 4.5 hours by train from Milan, 2.15 hours from Venice Marco Polo Airport and 1.5 hours from central Venice.

TRIESTESPRESSO EXPO

From October 23-25, 2014, the city of Trieste will host the seventh biennial edition of TriestEspresso Expo. The event brings together all aspects of the espresso coffee industry under one roof for international coffee industry professionals. www.triestespresso.it

CREMA PRO

Crema Pro, a new brand in the Peter McInnes range, will be exhibiting its comprehensive range of premium espresso machine accessories at Triestespresso Expo this year.







LITERARY HAUNTS

Café and literary trails intertwine along the selfguided audio tours (free with the purchase of a FVG card) starting at the tourism office in Piazza dell'Unità (Via dell'Orologio 1, www.turismo.fvg.it).

During 15 years in Trieste, Irish writer James Toyce completed his short story-novel Dubliners, while also penning some chapters of Ulysses. Between 10 changes of address, he frequented iconic cafés including Caffé Stella Polare (Via Dante Alighieri 14) and the dark wood-panelled Pasticceria Pirona Caffè (Largo Barriera Vecchia 12), another treasury of Austro-Hungarian tastes with cream puffs, putizza (a dried fruit and nut log) and presnitz (hazelnut scrolls).

Joyce, Italo Svevo and Franz Kafka snuggled in among the red velvet, mirrors and hat racks of Illy-backing Caffè Tommaseo (Piazza Nicolò Tommaseo 4c). The waterside historic monument dating to 1830 was once nicknamed 'the cerebrals' circle' and a plaque outside recognises its pivotal place in supporting the 1848 risorgimento, which led to Italy's reunification. For Jan Morris, moody, art-decked Caffè San Marco (Via Cesare Battisti 18) is Trieste's most evocatively historic haunt.

Aided and abetted by a bit more espresso fuel, head to the cluster of antiquities on San Giusto hill; the castle, Foro Romano, and Gothic Cattedrale di San Giusto. Views here extend over the city, from the Adriatic to the highland forests bordering Slovenia just a few kilometres north.

FISHY FLAVOURS

The city comes alive at the hour of the aperitivo, when crisp white Collio wines from surrounding hillsides flow in bars and restaurants such as Osteria da Marino (Via del Ponte 5), a charming hole-inthe-wall cellar of home cooking and 700 wines. SaluMare (Via di Cavana 10) is a taste laboratory of all things fishy: baccala mantecato (house-smoked and cured pureed cod), paté di burro e acciughe (a butter and salted anchovy pâté), fish-topped bruschetta and salads of octopus, squid and sardines. In summer, a small crowd spills onto its corner terrazzo clutching glass goblets of regional vino and sparkling Prosecco. For formal fish dishes and fantastic views, head to Scabar (Via Erta di Sant'Anna 63) four kilometres above Trieste. The menu favours local shellfish, dairy and organic produce swallowed down with cross-border wines - Italian Friuli and Collio varieties, and Slovenian Karst and Istria.

Trieste's working class history and mix of Italian, Germanic and Slavic cultures erupts at its markets. The 1936 Art Nouveau undercover Mercato Coperto (Via della Maiolica) was designed to protect merchants from the infamous winds, which also saw them occasionally cling to ropes throughout the city.

The cries in local dialect by the venderigole selling their wares on Piazza Ponterosso can be heard every Tuesday to Saturday mornings at the fruit, vegetable and flower market. Crossing adjacent Ponte Rosso, you will pass the bronze statue of James Joyce before finding yourself on the Canal Grande, skirted by cafés and other eateries in brightly painted Venetian-style houses. ®



A TASTE FOR TRAVEL



Clockwise: Caffe San

Marco, James Joyce's

statue on the Grand

Canale literary trail,

the Serbian Orthodox St

Spyridon Church, Trieste Marina, Bar Cataruzza,

crowds at Molo Audace,

he Mercato Coperto

(indoor market).