

A “Royal” Traveller In Trieste

By Katrina Warne

Originally published in Royalty Digest, issue 161, November 2004, and reproduced here by kind permission of the publisher, Paul Minet.

Although Royalty Digest is sadly no longer published as a monthly periodical, you can obtain back issues, including other “Royal traveller” articles. Katrina also writes Royal Traveller articles in the successor magazine, Royalty Digest Quarterly.

Trieste was re-united with Italy in 1918. Prior to this it played a major role as a seaport of The Austro-Hungarian Empire. After The Second World War Trieste remained under Allied control until 1954, when control of the area was divided between Italy and Yugoslavia. These border issues weren't resolved until 1975. Trieste is now in the Italian region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia and it is Slovenia, which lies across the border a few miles away to the east. The city is known for it's vicious trademark wind – the Bora.

It is a two-hour flight from Stansted to Trieste airport (Ronchi dei Legionari), which is quite small. The best time to go is when Ryan Air has one of their really cheap offers on. A regular bus service goes east from the airport to the city along the coast road. Trieste is set in a basin between the hills of the rocky limestone Karst and the Adriatic Sea. It is a lovely city with a beautiful pedestrian square at its heart called the Piazza dell'Unita d'Italia. It has some very interesting buildings around it. On the right hand side (with your back to the sea) is the Lloyd Triestino Palace and on the left hand side the Palazzo del Governo. A lot of effort has gone into renovating the Piazza over the last few years. If the weather is warm enough it is a lovely place to sit and eat in. The buildings are lit up at night.

It is quite a steep climb uphill to the Castello di San Giusto for a great view of the City and bay. It is also possible to see the Castle of Miramare from here, although the castle is also visible from the seafront. The Habsburg Emperor Frederick III built the castle. Nearby is the San Giusto Cathedral where some of the Carlist Kings are buried. The Carlists were Carlos Maria Isidro of Bourbon (known as Carlos V) and his descendants. They challenged the right of Queen Isabella II and her descendants to sit on the Spanish throne. Carlos V decided to establish his court in Trieste because his sister in law The Duchess of Berry owned a building at Via Lazzaretto Vecchio 9. She lived on the first floor and let Carlos V and his wife live on the second floor. The Carlist court was based in Trieste until 1874, when Carlos V's widow The Princesa de Beria died. Amongst those buried in The Carlist Royal Chapel are Carlos V (1788 – 1855); Carlos VI (1818 – 1861); Juan III (1822 – 1887) and Carlos VII (1848 – 1907). Both the castle and the cathedral are open daily.

On 2nd July 1914 the battleship “Viribus Unitis” arrived in Trieste carrying the bodies of The Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria and The Duchess of Hohenberg, who had been assassinated in Sarajevo five days earlier. Trieste at this time was still part of The Austro-Hungarian Empire and the bodies were brought ashore here en route to Vienna. The coffins were transferred from the “Viribus Unitis” to a smaller boat and brought ashore up the steps at the edge of Piazza dell'Unita d'Italia (which was called the Piazza Grande until 1918) where they were loaded onto hearses. The buildings seen in the background at the sides of the Piazza in photographs and old newsreels of 1914 are the buildings that are still there today. The cortège proceeded through the Piazza and turned left into the main street the Corso, now the Corso d'Italia. In Jan Morris' book “Trieste and the Meaning of Nowhere” there is a photograph of the funeral procession taken in the Corso, where it has paused for a moment. It is possible to work out where this photograph was taken as all the building on the far side of the street are still there.

The cortège then continued through the Piazza Carlo Goldoni and turned left into the Via Giosue Carducci. It then went through the Piazza Oberdan and the Piazza Dalmazia before turning left into the Via C. Ghenga. Half way along here it would have turned right into the Piazza Della Liberta where the Central Station is situated. At the station the coffins were put on a train bound for Vienna.

In the middle of the square in front of the station there is a statue of The Empress Elisabeth of Austria.

The highlight of a visit to Trieste has to be a visit to the castle of Miramare. This was built between the years 1856 and 1860 by Archduke Maximilian of Austria (1832 – 1867) and his wife Princess Charlotte of Belgium (1840 – 1927), later Emperor and Empress of Mexico. It is situated in a really lovely setting on a cliff overlooking the Adriatic and surrounded by a large park. The park was created by Maximilian, as there was no vegetation here prior to his occupancy of the land.



The ground floor rooms where they the couple actually lived are very nice and comfortable with windows overlooking the sea. There are motifs of a pineapple (a symbol of prosperity) on the decorations and a crowned anchor (reflecting Maximilian's position as a Rear admiral of the Austrian Navy). Both Maximilian's study and bedroom have a nautical theme. The formal reception rooms are on first floor and include a Throne Room. These rooms were completed after the couple left for Mexico, so Maximilian never saw them. A lot of the furniture came from the Villa Lazzarovich where Maximilian lived during his stay in Trieste from 1854 to 1857. Upstairs and outside another motif is also used – an eagle holding a snake,

which represents Mexico.

The couple moved into the castle on Christmas Day 1860. Whilst it was being built they lived in the Castelletto (little castle) in the grounds. This is where Charlotte lived when she came back to Miramare briefly after she left Mexico. After 1867 members of the Habsburg family occasionally occupied the castle. On 22nd March 1900 Crown Princess Stephanie married Elémer de Lonyay in the castle chapel.

Between 1930 and 1937 The 3rd Duke and Duchess of Aosta lived at Miramare. Amedeo (1898 – 1942) was later Viceroy of Ethiopia and died in Africa. He was married to Anne (1906 – 86) the daughter of Jean, Duke of Guise. The private apartments that they lived in are still there and contain busts and paintings of family members. There is also a very modern looking statue to the 3rd Duke in the grounds.

Beneath the castle is a small harbour and it was from here that Maximilian and Charlotte left for Mexico. The statue of Maximilian in the grounds used to stand in the centre of Trieste in the Piazza Venezia (formerly the Piazza Giuseppina). The castle is open daily and there is a café in the grounds. To get here from Trieste take a train to Miramare station or a No 36 bus. Whichever route you take there will be a short walk from the entrance to the grounds to the castle.

Twenty kilometres north west of Trieste is the village of Duino. Set high on a rocky promontory above a small harbour is perched the Castle of Duino with an older ruined castle nearby. The main castle is built around a Roman keep. An Atlantic World College is also based here. The Castle of Duino has had many Royal and distinguished visitors over the years. The most well known is probably Rainer Maria Rilke who began writing his Duino Elegies here in 1912. There is a coastal Rilke path named after him. His patroness was Princess Marie von Thurn and Taxis (1855 – 1934), who was born Princess Marie zu Hohenlohe-Waldenburg-Schillingsfurst. Her son Alexander (1881 - 1937) took Italian nationality in 1923 and assumed the title HSH Principe della Torre a Tasso, 1. Duca di Castel Duino. His son Raymond the 2nd Duke (1907 –86) was married to Princess Eugenie of Greece (1910 - 1989). It is their son Carlo the 3rd Duke (born 1952) who now lives at Duino with his wife and three children. The castle is open at the weekends, but only in December, January and February. Duino can be reached by bus, but some buses take a more “scenic” route than others. Alternatively there is a train from Trieste to Duino Aurisina station.

Further information: -

http://www.trieste.com/giroturistico_ing/girotur_hp.html

http://www.castello-miramare.it/castello_eng/orari/ora.htm

<http://www.castellodiduino.it/>

Jan Morris, *Trieste and the Meaning of Nowhere* [2001]

Memoirs of a Princess. The Reminiscences of Princess Marie von Thurn and Taxis [The Hogarth Press 1959]

Cesar Alcala, *Pamphlet on The Carlist Royal Chapel*

Rossella Fabiani, *Miramare A Guide to the Castle and it's Park* [Bruno Fachin Editore 1997]