

Short break

➤ glass box designed by Renzo Piano, suspended above the former Fiat factory at Lingotto. (The factory, now a shopping mall, was built in 1917 with a rooftop track for test driving and is worth a visit in itself.)

Taking up the theme, the nearby Museo Nazionale dell'Automobile mixes old cars and contemporary art in a way likely to enthrall even those who are not normally into the mysteries of mechanics.

I confess, though, that what lures me to Lingotto, which is about two miles from Porta Nuova station, are neither the Matisse nor the Fiat building, but Eataly next door. Eataly is a cross between a deli and

‘The Torinesi claim, with some justification, to be better at bonbons than the Swiss’

a megastore, with the finest food from all over Italy: cheeses and salamis, porcini and balsamico, bottled zabaglione and vacuum-packed panna cotta, artichokes in olive oil, peaches soaked in Muscat wine. A visit wreaks havoc with the luggage weight limit on the way home. In the midst of it all, a variety of eateries offer fresh fish, pasta, vegetarian dishes and more.

Turin (and Eataly) has strong connections with Slow Food, a movement that strives to preserve traditional, regional cuisine and local agriculture and was founded by Carlo Petrini, who comes from Bra, to the south of the city.

Even before Slow Food, there was a school of thought that favoured Piedmontese cooking as the best in Italy. Piedmont is the source of the world's best truffles, gorgonzola and other heavenly cheeses, *agnolotti* (delicate ravioli) and grissini, which, when fresh, have a delicious combination of crunchiness and softness that makes them infinitely superior to dry, pre-packed breadsticks.

Sumptuous Barolo red wines and subtly sparkling Moscato d'Asti come from the region, too. And Turin is the home of Lavazza



Above, Tre Galli in the Quadrilatero Romano, Turin's restaurant hub

coffee, Cinzano and Martini – and *gianduiotto*, that seductive combination of chocolate creamed with hazelnuts.

Turin's adoration for chocolate goes back to the 17th century. The *Torinesi* claim (with some justification) to be better at making bonbons than the Swiss. Chocolateries abound round town, stocking every type of truffle from classic to more challenging flavours, such as chilli and sea salt. And once you've tasted a *bicerin* – a thick mix of coffee and drinking chocolate – there is no turning back.



➤ **Fondazione Merz** holds paintings and sculptures by Mario Merz and hosts shows by exciting contemporary artists in a former heating plant for the Lancia factory. Via Limone 24 (00 39 011 1971 9437; www.fondazionemerz.org). Open Tues-Sun 11am-7pm; €5

GAM, the Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, has an excellent collection that includes work by both Andy Warhol and Antony Gormley. Via Magenta 31 (00 39 011 442 9158; www.gamtorino.it). Open Tues-Sun 10am-6pm; €7.50

Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo is a cavernous space with ample room for installations by the very hottest of the avant-garde. Via Modane 16 (00 39 011 379 7600; www.fondsr.org). Open Tues, Wed & Fri-Sun 2pm-7pm, Thur 2pm-7.30pm & 8pm-11pm; €5

WHERE TO STAY

Art Hotel Boston has individually designed rooms and a private art collection, below, making it a favourite



with celebs and artists. Via Massena 70 (00 39 011 500 359; www.hotelboston.torino.it). Doubles from €120

Townhouse

70 offers quiet, tasteful minimalism in a chic quarter of the city. Via XX Settembre 70 (00 39 011 1970 0003; www.townhouse.it/th70). Doubles from €159

B&B Via Stampatori is a real gem, housed in a 16th-century palazzo, but with each room an enchanting realm of modern Italian design; you can take breakfast on a private terrace overlooking the frescoed courtyard. Via Stampatori 4 (00 39 339 258 1330; www.viastampatori.com). Doubles from €100

GETTING THERE

British Airways (0844 493 0787; www.britishairways.com), **Easyjet** (www.easyjet.com) and **Ryanair** (www.ryanair.com) all fly to Turin.

Journey time By plane from London, it's around two hours.

WEATHER TO GO

☀ Autumn and spring are the most beautiful times to visit, though both can be rainy. December and January can be very cold and summers are hot and sultry.