

Italy’s historic cafés open their doors for a day

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ROME — Some 70 of Italy’s oldest cafés, pastry shops, restaurants, and hotels open their doors on Saturday October 3, for free tours, tastings, and talks. It is the sixth *Giornata Nazionale dei Locali Storici d’Italia* (National Day of Italy’s Historic Venues).

This year’s theme is the noble families who treated these rooms as extensions of their palaces, from Savoy Turin to Bourbon Naples, according to the organisers.

The day is run by the Associazione Locali Storici d’Italia, founded in 1976, which groups around 200 venues that have traded for at least 70 years and kept their original furnishings. Its ambassadors this year are Prince Guglielmo Giovanelli Marconi, grandson of the radio pioneer Guglielmo Marconi, and his wife, Princess Vittoria.

“For us this is a role of great prestige, because it promotes the roots of Italy’s most beautiful venues, the richest in history,” said Giovanelli Marconi, a university history lecturer. “They are, by every right, the social backbone of our great country’s uniqueness.”

Noble rooms

In Turin, Caffè Al Bicerin, open since 1763 opposite the Consolata sanctuary, offers free guided tours. Camillo Benso di Cavour, the statesman who steered Italian unification, is said to have waited at its marble tables for visiting royals.

In Venice, Caffè Florian opens its rooms for free tours, while the owners of Naples’ Gran Caffè Gambrinus will guide visitors themselves. Padua’s Caffè Pedrocchi and Milan’s Camparino in Galleria

Source: https://italynow.co.uk/italys-historic-cafes-open-their-doors-for-a-day/

are also taking part, according to the programme published by Comunicaffè.

In Palermo, the theme summons Franca Florio, the Belle Époque hostess painted by Giovanni Boldini, who received high society at Villa Igiea. That hotel is not on this year's list, but the Antica Focacceria San Francesco is.



Caffe Pedrocchi, Padua (*Credits: Associazione locali storici d'Italia*)

Closing shutters

The open day comes as old shops close across Italy. Venice's historic centre lost more than 200 shops between 2012 and 2025, falling from 1,403 to 1,171, Il Gazzettino reported, citing Confcommercio, the national retailers' federation.

In Tuscany, more than 700 shops founded before 1980 shut in five years, La Nazione reported. In Verona, a third of historic food shops closed in 13 years, squeezed by supermarkets, rents, and a lack of successors, L'Arena reported.

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Offers vary by venue, and some require booking, according to the association, whose website lists the full programme. For one Saturday, the rooms where Italians once argued over politics and business ask a new generation to sit down.

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