

Trieste started to catch up with this coffee [craze](#) in 1719, when its port was declared tax-free under Austro-Hungarian rule. Trade began with coffee arriving from the Ottoman Empire, and Trieste was soon supplying beans to cafes throughout the Austro-Hungarian Empire – including Vienna's famous coffee houses.

Giving the city a big boost was Maria Theresa, Head of the House of Habsburg, who goes down in history as the heroine who turned Trieste into a powerful port city. [Bizarrely](#), she never actually set foot in Trieste, but since the Habsburg territories had gone into huge debt during her father's reign, she looked to the city as a money maker.

To jumpstart its economy, in 1751 she **shrewdly** made Trieste open to all religions – a bold move, given that elsewhere, the Catholic Hapsburg family had deported Protestants, required dress codes for Jews and only allowed Catholics to attend universities. Workers and entrepreneurs soon arrived in Trieste from all over the Mediterranean to start companies and build up the shipping and coffee business.

Shrewdly /'ʃru:dli/ adv: cleverly

Trieste remains a diverse and tolerant city today. It's home to one of the largest synagogues in Europe, a mosque; and its 19th-Century Serbian Orthodox Church, adorned with gold mosaics and **spires**, adds **dazzle** to the historical centre. Wander through the city's streets and you'll notice that the local Triestino dialect can sound more Austrian-German than Italian, with touches of Croatian and Greek.

Synagogue /'sɪnəgɒg/

Spire/spraɪə/noun: a tapering conical or pyramidal structure on the top of a building, typically a church tower.

Dazzle noun: a thing that impresses you

And the coffee business continues to thrive. In addition to Illy, founded in 1933, dozens of other smaller companies roast and blend the millions of bags of coffee beans that arrive from all over the world to Trieste's docks each year. "It's great to open the windows when you drive south," said Ressa. "The air from the warehouses is full of the smell of coffee!"

Each October (hopefully returning in 2022), there's the Trieste Coffee Festival, when roasteries open for tastings, restaurants create dishes spiced with coffee and there's a "Capo in B" championship to name the city's best barista.

Fortunately for visitors, some of the cafes built in the 1800s that were modelled after Vienna's elegant coffee houses can still be found in Trieste's historical centre. It's a great way to blend in with the Triestini, who casually **linger** amidst chandeliers and **potted** palms.

linger/'lɪŋgə/verb: stay in a place longer than necessary because of a reluctance to leave.

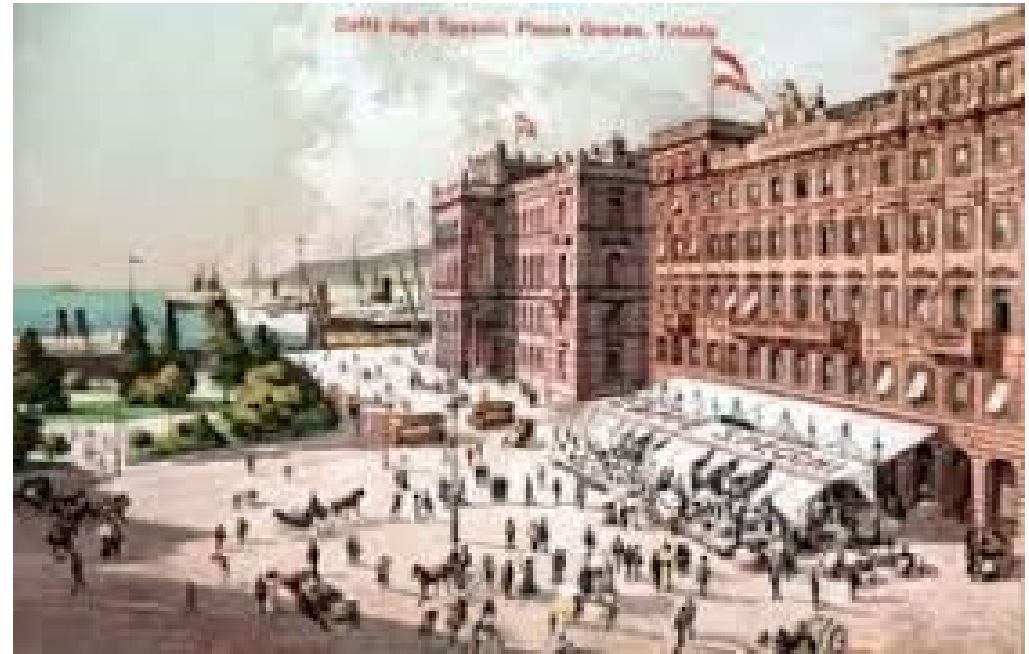
"she lingered in the yard, enjoying the warm sunshine"

These were places where James Joyce would hang out after moving to Trieste in 1904, where political rebels would hold meetings and where American soldiers danced with local signorine during the Allies' World War Two occupation.

An outside table at Trieste's Caffè degli Specchi, from 1839, is an ideal spot to take in the city's Piazza Unità d'Italia. Locals claim this is the largest seafront square in the world.

Arriving here is breathtaking, with one side open to the Adriatic and the rest **flanked** by a grand Neoclassical expanse of four-storey pale grey and ivory stone buildings.

Flank verb: to be placed on one or both sides of sth



Caffè degli Specchi

It's a harmonious vision of arches and balconies, with a gold-faced clock at its centre topped by bronze figures who clang it on the hour. As I watched customers slip in and out of the Specchi's red-leather banquettes, I could imagine a Belle Epoque scene of the past, when four cafes filled this square frequented by ladies [twirling parasols](#) and gentlemen in top hats.

Twirl /twɜːl/

Parasol /'parəsɒl/



Beyond the piazza there's Caffè Tommaseo from 1830, a cosy series of pearly rooms **adorned** /ə'dɔ:n/ with sculpted angels and waiters in **crisp** jackets and red ties, and La Bomboniera from 1836, a jewel box of a pastry shop offering such Austrian goodies as Linzer and Sachertorte cakes.

adorn/ə'dɔ:n/verb: make more beautiful or attractive.

"pictures and prints adorned his walls"

Crisp cloth is smooth, clean, and fresh.

He put on a crisp white shirt.

The duo are managed by the Peratoner chocolate company, and to welcome visitors they give out charming cards that translate Trieste's curious coffee language.



Caffè Tommaseo

Yet the favourite of every Triestino I met is Caffè San Marco, founded in 1914 and located just outside the historical centre. The scene inside is warm and retains its stunning original design, with bronze coffee leaves bordering its ceiling and an antique copper espresso machine. There's a bookstore on site and marble tables full of customers playing chess. Locals consider the owner, Alexandros Delithanassis, a city hero. A former book publisher, he took over the cafe in 2013 and saved it from **demise** /dɪ'mɪz/.

Demise (verb): transfer of property or a title by will or lease.



Caffè San Marco

Delithanassis has turned the cafe's back room into a place for groups to meet and small concerts and book presentations to be held, giving the establishment a community centre vibe. On my last night in the city, I **slipped into** the back room and joined a gathering of expats who were from places like England, Finland, Egypt, Australia – even Naples.

Slip into: to gradually start to be in a bad state or situation.
She felt herself slip into unconsciousness.

Inevitably, the conversation turned to coffee, and again and again, I heard something that didn't surprise me: since each of them had moved to Trieste, they had found they were drinking much more of it.