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5 fun facts about Genoa you did not know about

Posted on November 16, 2020 by bestregardsfromfar

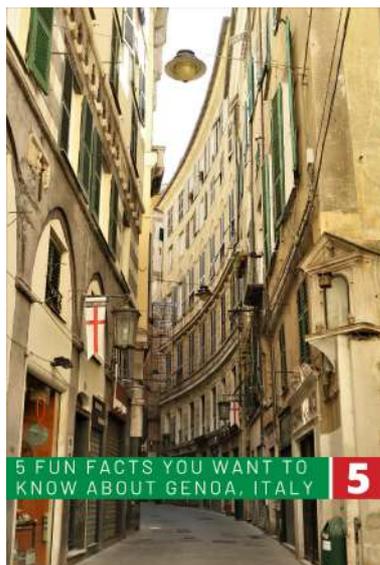
Text: Marcella van Alphen

Photographs: Marcella van Alphen & Claire Lessiau

1. And you thought blue jeans came from the States?

By mid-16th century more than half of the population of Genova worked in the silk industry. The craftsmanship in the city-state was so renown that exclusive royal garments were often made in Genoa. Collaborating with the city of [Lucca](#) where silk was produced, Genoa functioned as trading post and benefited hugely from this trade. However, these precious clothes were unaffordable for common people, let alone sailors.

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As an important harbour town Genoa developed the making of sturdy sails for their ships. The strong fabric of which sails were made became popular among sailors as it was cheap and sturdy. Genoa in Latin used to be written with a J instead of a G. The sturdy fabric became known as: *Bleu de Gênes*. Much later, in 1873, two USA immigrants, Levi Strauss and Jacob Davis, patented and commercialised resistant riveted pants made of denim and the Blue Jeans as we know them were born. Still, their origins lie in Genoa, Italy.

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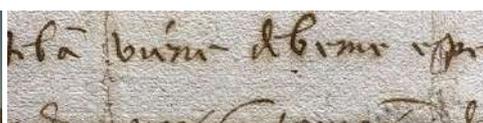
2. Pesto was born in Genoa

Everyone knows the green coloured pesto from Italy. In Italian the word *pestare* means "to crush" or "to pound" and in this case refers to the way herbs are crushed in a marble mortar with a wooden pestle. The past participle of *pestare* is *pestato* which in its contracted form is more commonly known as pesto. Technically speaking Italy knows many different types of pestos but the most frequently savoured and most famous one is the typical *Pesto alla Genovese*. As the original name implies, it was created in Genoa and consists mainly of garlic, lots of fresh basil leaves, pine nuts, Parmesan cheese and olive oil. Locals eat it with their *trofie* pastas, and in their minestrone soup. For the secrets of how to make this delicious and healthy pesto, refer to [this article](#).



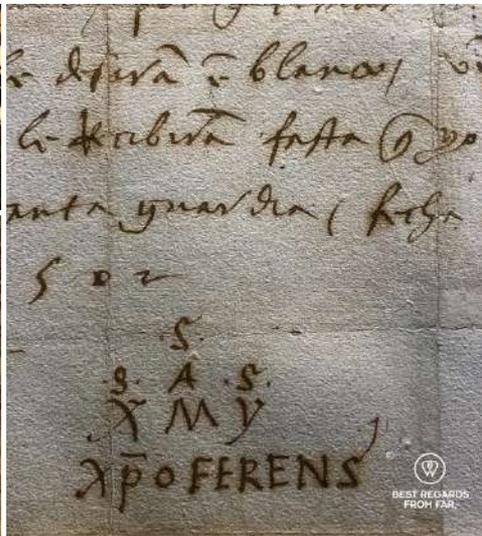
3. The most famous Genoese: Christopher Columbus

The great explorer who discovered the Americas was born in 1451 in Genoa. He left the old port by sail boat and his navigation techniques made him one of the greatest explorers of all times. If the origins of Columbus (1451-1506) who sailed for the Spanish crown are still disputed to this day, a letter he wrote in 1502 and that is displayed at the Maritime Museum confirms his Genoese origins. The alleged house in which he grew up was rebuilt in the 18th century where it used to stand just outside of the 14th century city walls, and turned into a museum.



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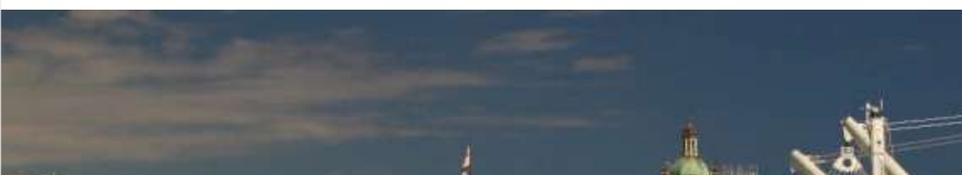
4. World's first public bank was established in Genoa...

Genoa traded a lot during the Middle Ages and was one very prosperous. However, when Genoa fought its war with Venice (1378-1381), the republic went bankrupt. To consolidate the public debt the Casa di San Giorgio was authorised to create a bank which could pay back Genoa's debts. In return they would get interests and the right to collect taxes. It was in 1407 in the Casa di San Giorgio, a marvellous building that still exists today, was founded. It existed over 400 years and grew as powerful as the city. And of course, Columbus was one of its prominent customers.



5. World-famous Genoa-born architect Renzo Piano has left his mark

Born in 1937 in a family of builders, Renzo Piano spent his childhood in Genoa helping his father in the building company he owned. The young Renzo developed a passion for architecture and a few decades later would change the skyline of his birth town. Renzo's big breakthrough was his design of the controversial Centre Pompidou in Paris in the 1970's. Afterwards, his influential structures have been scattered all over the world: the Shard in London, the Potsdamer Platz in Berlin, the [Astrup Fearnly Museum](#) in Oslo, the New York Times Building and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City, the Kansai International Airport of Osaka, etc. Renzo Piano's latest contribution to his beloved Genoa was inaugurated in August 2020 when the first cars could pass over the newly designed Saint George's Bridge which replaces the Morandi Bridge that collapsed in August 2018 killing 43. The cross-section of the bridge resembles the hull of a ship to pay tribute to the seafaring city. Piano also participated in reshaping the harbour with Il Bigo (the crane-line structure used as a concert venue in Summer and ice-skating rink in Winter), the Genoa Aquarium and the Biosphere floating glass bowl hosting its own tropical forest and bird species.





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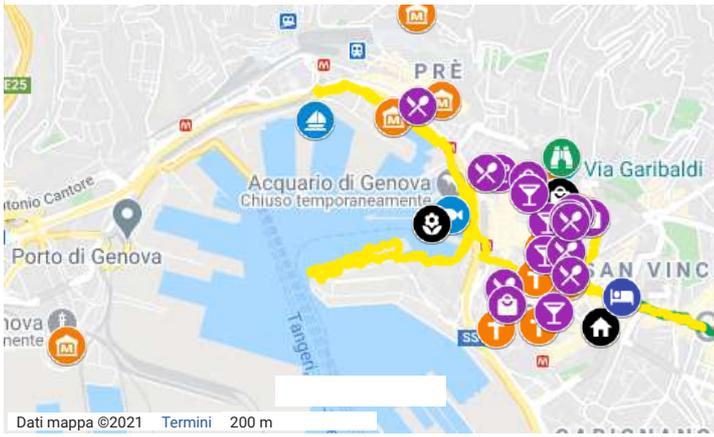
- To explore Genoa, stay at the [Hotel Bristol Palace](#).



- Check out this [interactive map](#) for the specific details to help you plan your trip and more articles and photos (zoom out) about the area! Here is a [short tutorial](#) to download it.

Italy by Best Regards From Far ☆

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