



The Grand Tour of Europe

Professor Kathleen Burk

6 April 2005

What, exactly, was the Grand Tour? How did it differ from common-or-garden tourism? First of all, it was a journey to the Continent, primarily to France and Italy, to improve the sartorial, social and cultural awareness of well-born young men, to enable them to make useful contacts, and generally to introduce them to foreign lands and cultures. This does not mean that older men, and even women, did not travel for these reasons, and certainly, by the nineteenth century, thousands of them did. But the Grand Tour was normally an episode in the early lives of the moneyed and upper classes of the eighteenth century. The idea of a Grand Tour developed out of growing awareness in the seventeenth century of other times and other places. During the first half of the eighteenth century, particularly after 1720, enough young men embarked on a journey to the Continent for it to become an accepted stage in a man's growing maturity; scheduling could sometimes be tricky, of course, since the journeys had to fit into the periods of peace between Great Britain and France. During the second half of the century, taking the Grand Tour was not only accepted, but it was also expected, and during the long period of peace from the end of the Seven Years' War in 1763, there was a flood of visitors to the Continent. But in 1796, Napoleon occupied Italy, and it all stopped. But the phenomenon of the Grand Tour left behind a notable legacy of art and architecture, and an awareness of the slight possibility that, as Yorick said in Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*, 'They order, said I, this matter better in France.'

The idea of travel as broadening a man's mind and expanding his range of experience was hardly new. The formal concept was given authoritative support by Francis Bacon. In his essay 'On Travel', written in 1615, he pronounced the journey dedicated to educational travel to be an indispensable experience for a young man ambitious to play a leading rôle in society and politics. Such travels were especially important for those young men destined for a diplomatic career, for which they required a knowledge of languages, of other political systems, of the leading men of other countries, and of geography, roads and fortifications. Queen Elizabeth I supported the teenaged Philip Sidney on such travels in 1572, for example, and the young Joseph Addison, later the founder of and writer for *The Spectator*, received in 1699 £200 from government funds to enable him to travel in preparation for a diplomatic career.

The term 'Grand Tour' itself first appeared in the French translation of Richard Lassels' *Voyage or a Complete Journey Through Italy*, which was published in 1670. This was one of a number of accounts of travel on the Continent, most of which were written by Englishmen, and by the early eighteenth century, there was a steady stream of such publications. The eighteenth century then saw a massive growth in the production of books, newspapers, and other printed material, and this encouraged the development of different types of writing and publishing, including travel accounts. There also emerged travel guides, the most useful of which was probably *The Grand Tour* containing an *Exact Description* of most of the Cities, Towns and Remarkable Places of Europe by Mr [Thomas] Nugent, first published in four volumes in 1743, and repeatedly republished. An alternative was *The Gentleman's Pocket Companion for Travelling into Foreign Parts*, first published in 1722, which contained a list of useful phrases at the end, but not, perhaps, those which the well-bred young man should employ.

Overwhelmingly, it was Italy, and particularly Rome, which was the focus of the Grand Tour in the 18th century. Italian culture had assumed dominance in Europe during the 16th century, when its philosophy, arts

and literature were widely disseminated, along with fashions in dress and living. Italian artists were employed in Spain, France, and the Austrian Empire, and by the mid-seventeenth century, it was common for artists of other countries to travel to and work in Italy. Soon, great numbers of their paintings and drawings made their way back to the Netherlands, England, and France. Of particular interest were seventeenth-century landscape paintings by Claude Lorrain, the two Poussins, and the Italian Salvatore Rosa. They were appreciated by collectors in all European countries, but especially by the English, and a flood of them entered Great Britain and hung on hundreds of walls. This is one example, Lorrain's 'Pastoral Landscape with the Pont Molle' from 1645. This shows a round tower and farm buildings on the left, peasants on the bottom, and the bridge, the Pons Milvius, over the River Tiber, the last-named evocative in itself.

The English formed their views of Italy from many of these pictures, and others which circulated in books of engravings, and then decided to go to Italy to see it for themselves. What they primarily wanted to see were the remains of the ancient world. This was the period dominated by the so-called 'cult of the Antique'. Greece, enfolded as it was within the embrace of the Ottoman Empire, was beyond the reach of most travellers; it was Italy, warm, cheap, and strewn with the memories and relics of the Roman Empire, which drew most travellers.

A typical Grand Tourist was a young man with a thorough grounding in Greek and Latin literature, some interest in art, and very healthy financial resources. One example was the 8th Duke of Hamilton, who travelled to the Continent with Dr John Moore, shown on the left, as his tutor, friend, preceptor and physician. [On the right-hand side of the painting is Moore's son, Ensign Moore, the future hero of Corunna during the Peninsular War.] The young Duke travelled to Italy in 1772 at the age of sixteen, and spent four years there, engaging in amorous adventures and spending large sums on art. In this he was no different from numerous of his age and class, except, perhaps, in spending rather more than most on art.

What virtually all of these young men had in common was the accompanying tutor or guardian, usually called a 'bear-leader'. The picture shows Dr James Hay, who led at least eight Grand Tourists on tours of Italy. Here he is shown gracelessly leading a simple-minded, smartly dressed bear along a country road. Bear-leaders were responsible for the safety and financial control of their charges. [Hugh Belsey]. The bear-leader was often an aspiring academic or schoolmaster, who also tried to encourage his charge's interest in art and antiquities, and to facilitate introductions to those who might later be useful to the young Grand Tourist. He also had to try to keep him out of trouble. In this, they were frequently unsuccessful. The undisciplined and sometimes violent behaviour of young Englishmen was often commented upon; certainly, for the staff of British embassies abroad, the activities of English visitors, 'each vying with the other who should be the wildest and most eccentric', were a major preoccupation. 'Even Russians were impressed by the cohorts of wild English youth they found in the cities of western Europe.' [Paul Langford]

But never mind all of that. You are a youth of late teenage, who has gone to a good to middling school and had your head stuffed with Greek and Latin texts. You may have gone to Oxford, you may have spent some time in the Inns of Court, or you may have spent your life on the family estate. No matter: you need the social polish which only Paris can provide, and you need the cultural polish which only Italy can provide. Or: you might be the same or slightly older and need to travel to learn of foreign lands and languages and intrigues. Or, you might be a lover of the Antique, and want, before you die, to see the Colosseum for yourself. You might be a man of mature years, a lover of the arts, who wishes to travel to see what you cannot see at home. You might even be a lady, but there were rather fewer of these until later in the eighteenth century. But in any case, you have to make many of the same preparations for travel in what would undoubtedly be dangerous as well as enchanting territory.

Should the Grand Tourist take his own carriage, or, since the roads are rough and pitted - because of the privately-built turnpike system, Great Britain had by far the best roads in Europe - should you buy one in France, with the intention of selling it at the end of his journey? Travellers certainly had to take a telescope and pistol, the former for sight-seeing, the latter for safety - a great danger all over the Continent was the threat of bandits and robbers, and the man without the means of defending himself had, it was feared a

limited lifespan. If anyone in the travelling party was injured, or fell ill, it was no use depending on foreign doctors, who were well-known to be all quacks; rather, the traveller took along his or her own medicine chest. As a footnote, a lady would have had her own cross to bear in the shape of her travelling garments. Here is a mid-eighteenth century travelling jacket and skirt. This would have been worn over a hooped petticoat, with the bodice stiffened with six whalebones at the back and two at the front. I do not even like to think about wearing such a costume over a long journey in a coach.

There were many trials in store for the intrepid traveller. First of all, how was it all to be paid for? There were hundreds of currencies in use and changing them at each border would soon rack up commissions totalling more than the money changed; furthermore, the knowledge that a traveller was carrying more than a modicum of cash would virtually ensure an attempt at robbery. The answer was to carry letters of credit from one's own bank, which would be honoured at correspondent banks on the Continent. Passports were required, and often the equivalent of visas for every insignificant little territory. But even worse at borders were the customs men. Some searched for firearms and jewels, some for forbidden items - in the Papal States, luggage was searched for forbidden books - some generally pilfered, but all border officials enjoyed the exercise of petty power and the chance to extract commissions and bribes. If the Tourist finally made it through the border, he was then at the mercy of inns and hotels. Some could be tolerable, most were barely so, and many were unspeakable - the inns of the Germanies were famous for being beyond belief horrible. What travellers of any birth or fortune tried to do was to stay with friends, or with friends of friends, or with the British representative in whichever city was being visited.

The itinerary of the Grand Tour was not fixed. However, in the 18th century, the focus was on Paris, and then on four cities in Italy: Venice, Florence, Rome, and Naples. Some also went to Switzerland and Germany, and those who could not afford such a long journey made a 'trip' to Paris and the Low Countries alone. But during this period, Italy had to be visited: there was little point in the journey otherwise. And so off went the young man and his party, comprising his bear-leader, his valet, his coachman, and a varied number of other servants. Here is the first stage in the journey: taking the packet from England to France. If you look at the size of the ship, and the motion of the waves, and consider that it might take up to thirty-six hours to make the crossing in adverse weather, it becomes quite clear why a constant element in accounts of travels is the agony of seasickness. But once in Paris, all this was forgotten. Paris was where the young man shed his inadequate social abilities along with his English clothes and put on a new set of accomplishments along with his new wardrobe. Certainly, he was recommended to burn whatever he wore upon reaching Paris, and to acquire everything new - cleanliness, clothes, boots, wigs, handkerchiefs, possibly earrings, and certainly scent. 'But manners were the crown of the aristocratic approach to life' [Anthony Burgess], and in order to join the life of the court, in France the only life worth living, the Englishman had to display the manners of the nobility, not of the bourgeoisie. He had to study the art of pleasing. This was not merely by means of conversation and the well-turned compliment: it meant pleasing with the whole body, 'regarding one's dancing-master as the most important man in Europe... since he would teach exquisite deportment: "You must dance well in order to sit, stand and walk well; and you must do all these well, in order to please."' As one writer has continued, 'And, of course, there were more intimate employments of one's body to be learnt in the practice of amour. French society was exquisite, but it made no bones about promiscuity. Generally speaking, Paris was not there to inculcate in you the profounder principles of moral philosophy but to instruct you in the exterior graces and show you how to sharpen the instruments of pleasure.' [Burgess]

Young men on their first journey abroad would probably have remembered that they were in Paris to improve their sensibilities as well as their appearance and social deportment, and a visit to the Galerie of the Louvre would certainly be on the list. But then came the day of departure. As a wealthy traveller you would probably be driving in your own carriage; but as a mark of eccentricity you might take the diligence from Paris to Lyons, down the Rhône Valley to Switzerland and then to Italy. This is where a note of the unreal comes into this picture of an imaginary journey. If you were a Briton who had never left your native land, what would have been your supreme experience of landscape? Ben Nevis in Scotland? Snowdon in Wales? Comparatively speaking, these are foothills: imagine the reaction of the traveller upon reaching the Alps and seeing mountains for the first time in his life? And imagine as well the dawning realisation that he would have to travel over these mountains to reach Italy? Seeing them on a map, and then seeing them in front of you, were two entirely different matters. There was an alternative, and this was to take a boat from Marseilles to,

say, Genoa. But this route had two drawbacks: one was the possibility of attack by Barbary pirates, and the other was the equally strong possibility of an extended bout of seasickness. On the whole, more went by the scenic route.

There was no carriage road over the Mount Cenis pass - and would not be until the nineteenth century - and the carriage would be dismantled and carried over by mule. The traveller would go by Alp-machine, which was essentially a sedan chair attached by ropes to poles carried by two to four porters. A glance at the picture gives you an idea of the somewhat alarming nature of the trek. However, it was not the Alp-machine which terrified travellers beyond speech: it was the sled by which it was sometimes necessary to complete the crossing. Once on the Piedmontese plain, however, the traveller could resume his journey in his re-built carriage and make his way, via Susa and Turin, to the city in which he planned to spend a few days: Venice.

This is a painting by Canaletto of the Molo as seen from the basin of San Marco. Venice, as it happened, stood apart from the other Italian towns both geographically and historically. It had been a powerful commercial republic during the mediaeval period, and this was its ambience, not that of ancient Rome. But trade had moved to the northern port cities with the growth of trade with the New World, and Venice was now in decline. To the enlightened traveller, it was out of the modern period and wonderfully dissolute. As one writer noted, 'If licentiousness is the same thing as liberty, no nation on earth can enjoy an equal freedom with the Venetians.' [John Hinchcliffe] In short, Venice was a city of sin, and the city where the Grand Tourist could practice those skills which he had recently acquired in Paris. Indeed, one writer has baldly stated that British gentlemen came to Venice for the women. A major source of this picture of Venice was the extravagant behaviour of Venetian courtesans, as well as their extravagant cost. The suppliant cynically proffering the string of pearls, and her eager acceptance of the offering, possibly tells us all that we need to know. But it was probably the antics during Carnevale which determined the general view of Venice as a city full of lustful women. There were Carnivals in both Rome and Venice, but whilst Carnival lasted for twelve days in Rome, in Venice it lasted from Boxing Day to Shrove Tuesday, attracting as many as thirty thousand tourists. The days and nights were filled with dazzling regattas, opera, street parties, and masquerades, and it was the masquerades which gave the well-born and wealthy their most convenient opportunities to engage in dalliance. Thomas Broderick wrote in his Travels of 1754 that 'At Venice one hardly sees the face of a woman that one may not have if one has a mind to it', and as Carnevale drew to a close for the year, discretion was increasingly thrown to the winds. It is perhaps not wholly surprising that Venice was the venue of a large number of lewd poems detailing the activities of young - and old - Englishmen and their medical result: the pox.

This painting by Thomas Patch shows a favourite panoramic view of Florence. Florence was the city of leisure and of art. It was well-known for the slow pace of life, leading the British poet Thomas Gray to note that a person could 'get up at twelve o'clock, breakfast at three, dine till five, sleep till six, drink cooling liquors till eight, go to bridge till ten, sup till two, and so sleep till twelve again.' What one did, when neither eating nor sleeping, was to look at art. It is worth pausing for a moment to remember what that meant for the Briton of the eighteenth century. What art did you find in Great Britain at that time? On the walls of country and town houses, portraits and perhaps landscapes; in churches, almost nothing; and in museums, again nothing, because art collections barely existed; those few which did were in private houses. Can you imagine the effect of visiting Italy in this context? Granted, museums hardly existed there either, except for the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, but churches were full of paintings, and visitors were usually allowed to view the collections in private palaces and villas. This painting by Zoffany shows the Tribuna of the Uffizi Gallery. As a contrast, this is what it looks like today, when many see it as just another part to walk through. The origins of the Uffizi lay in the private collection of the Medici family. In 1581, Francesco I set up a Gallery 'with pictures, statues and other precious things' on the last floor of the East Wing of the Uffizi. In 1584 the Tribuna, an unusual octagonal-shaped room which was the heart of the original museum, was completed. In this room were displayed the most precious items of the Grand Duke's collection. Successive Dukes enriched the collection, until the last heir of the Medicis, Anna Maria Luisa de' Medici, declared before dying in 1743 that the Gallery was to be 'public and inalienable property'. The Tribuna was the centre for British Grand Tourists in Florence. Here they gathered to meet, drink tea, admire the art, and generally to conjoin social contacts and connoisseurship. On the right, standing in profile with his decorations, is Sir Horace Mann, British representative in Florence for nearly fifty years, and famous for the care he took of visiting countrymen. The

room is full of men earnestly discussing art. Indeed, it might have been difficult to pull oneself away. The painting was commissioned by Queen Charlotte in 1772, and it has become one of the most famous of evocations of eighteenth-century connoisseurship and the Grand Tour.

Rested, refreshed, and reinvigorated, the Grand Tourist travelled - with some danger from banditti - to the focus of his journey, the ultimate destination, Rome. Rome had the greatest number of impressive ancient sites and the outstanding collection of classical sculpture, a collection which continued to grow, with pieces continually emerging from excavations. The Colosseum was one of the most favourite of all subjects for painters in Rome, depicted from all angles and at all times of the day and night, but there were many others. The almost mystical impact on a classically educated young man of arrival in the Eternal City was memorably described by Edward Gibbon in his *Autobiography*: 'My temper is not very susceptible of enthusiasm, and the enthusiasm which I do not feel I have ever scorned to affect. But, at the distance of twenty-five years, I can neither forget nor express the strong emotions which agitated my mind as I first approached and entered the eternal city. After a sleepless night, I trod, with a lofty step, the ruins of the Forum; each memorable spot where Romulus stood, or Tully spoke, or Caesar fell, was at once present in my eye; and several days of intoxication were lost or enjoyed before I could descend to a cool and minute investigation.' And, indeed, he did so. But the intoxication evolved into something of eternal value, for, as he writes a bit further on in his *Autobiography*, 'It was at Rome, on the 15 th of October, 1764, as I sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol, while the barefooted friars were singing vespers in the Temple of Jupiter, that the idea of writing the decline and fall of the city first started to my mind.'

Rome, the capital of the Papal States, was essentially a provincial city, dominated by the papal court and a number of princely families. Yet it was also the major European cultural centre, the meeting point for a large number of the most significant artists and architects, as well as of scholars and writers. They, in their turn, drew to Rome a cosmopolitan variety of patrons and collectors, as well as a continuing flood of art-lovers, and those who would be thought art-lovers. But fundamentally, they were all in Rome because it was Rome, the place of the Colosseum, the Forum, the Capitol, the Arch of Constantine, and, as depicted in this painting by Giovanni Panini, the Pantheon. The Pantheon was originally built in 27 BC as a temple to all the gods, but from the 7th century it had been a Christian church. It was and is the only Greco-Roman building which is completely intact, and which has been in continuous use. But Rome also had the temples of the Catholic Church, the Basilica of St Peter and the Vatican. Months were not enough to see Rome properly, but writers of guidebooks, realistically, recommended three hours' sightseeing each morning for six weeks.

The countryside around Rome, the wide plain of the Campagna bounded by Tivoli in the Sabine hills to the east and by the Alban hills to the south, had a special appeal. This was the landscape most closely associated with the birth of Rome, where the battles with the tribes of Latium and the Sabines, the Volscians and the Etruscans, had taken place. It was dotted with the ruins of temples and villas and, along the Appian Way, with tombs and memorials, and for the classically trained visitor, it was evocative beyond measure. In addition, the Campagna was the realm of pastoral poetry, of Arcadia, as described in the poetry of Horace and Theocritus and Virgil. Visitors stopped at Tivoli, which had been a favoured retreat during the time of Imperial Rome, when it was called Tibur. This picture by Francis Towne is of the Temple of the Sibyl, perched on a cliff above the ravine of the tremendous rush of water called the Grand Cascade. This is one of the most spectacular sites at Tivoli, the beauty of which had been celebrated by Horace, amongst others. Another famous site at Tivoli was the Villa d'Este, built in 1649, and site of the most celebrated Renaissance and Baroque gardens on the Grand Tour. The terraces spread down the steep hillside, dotted with unrivalled fountains and hydraulic effects - altogether it was a stunning vista. This etching was by Giovanni Piranesi, one of the most famous artists of the century, who devoted much of his time to drawing and etching complex buildings - he had spent some years surveying this site. His etchings were collected together into volumes, and frequently presented as gifts to fellow visiting royals by the Italian kings and rulers. London, as it happens, was the international centre of the print trade, and his books of etchings could be found in many British houses - indeed, this etching can be found today in the Library of the Royal Institute of British Architects.

Grand Tourists were keen to record what they were seeing, and, lacking the cameras of today's tourists, they

were reduced to drawing the sights themselves. This was, of course, a period when all educated English men and women were taught how to draw, so that the idea of picking up a pencil or pen was a natural one. This drawing by Archibald Skirving is of British tourists in Rome in 1792. But not everyone could draw, nor wished to do so. Yet, the tour must be commemorated. In the opinion of some art historians, this picture by James Russel, entitled 'British Connoisseurs in Rome', is 'the quintessential representation of the Grand Tour in Rome'. [Hugh Belsey] Six gentlemen, some of whom have been identified - Lord Charlemont is on the left, for example - are making extravagant gestures towards the Colosseum and the Arch of Constantine. This is very far from being the only such painting, but it is the perfect analogy to those tourists of today who feel an overwhelming need to have their picture taken next to, or in front of, whatever famous site they are currently visiting, partly to ensure that no one, including themselves, doubts that they have actually been there.

Now is the point at which to pause and consider some of the events which a Grand Tourist wished to experience - the viewing of great art and old ruins was part of the tour, but by no means was this the sum total of it. One historian has stated that the main purpose of the Grand Tour was not to study art: rather, it was to experience and study foreign cultures. Travel books provided travellers with detailed instructions on how to behave and what to see. They were recommended to attend council meetings and court hearings, church services and festivals, in order to gain an idea of local government, customs and traditions. One aspect of life which amazed northern Europeans was daily life in the streets and squares - and they were particularly amazed by the Italians' habit of driving up and down the streets in their magnificent carriages. [Petra Lamers]

This picture shows a meeting of the Parlement in Paris, which, with permission, British visitors might attend. Another of the most important experiences for travellers was to attend the ceremonies of the Catholic Church, and this watercolour by Jean-Louis Desprez depicts a religious festival. It shows the interior of the cathedral of St Gennaro in Naples on the day of the liquifaction of the blood of St Gennaro, one of the city's most important events. According to legend, when St Gennaro was decapitated in AD 305, a man whom he had cured of blindness collected the blood in a phial. While the body was being taken to Naples, the blood miraculously liquified. This miracle has been repeated three times a year since 1389: in early May, on 19 September, and on 16 December. If it does not occur, this is regarded as a harbinger of great misfortune, and countless believers pray in the cathedral for the miracle to occur. [Petra Lamers] This watercolour by Hubert Robert shows pilgrims in front of the statue of St Peter on his throne, which stands at the base of the north-east crossing pier of the nave of St Peter's Basilica in Rome. The watercolour not only shows the awed reverence of the pilgrims: he also shows the respectful fascination of the tourists. A little girl wants to be lifted up to see the statue, while a beggar woman asks for alms. [Lamers]

Grand Tourists would plan to be in Rome on 29 June for the festival of St Peter and St Paul. In this painting, Joseph Wright of Derby has depicted in all its glory the Girandola, the fireworks at the Castel Sant'Angelo, which celebrated this festival and, more rarely, to celebrate the inauguration of a new pope. This was one of the most spectacular sights of eighteenth-century Rome, and there are many accounts of it. Goethe described it in his Italian Journey: he thought the fireworks 'spectacular, like a scene from fairyland; one can hardly believe one's eyes.... To see the colonnade, the church and, above all, the dome, first outlined in fire and, after an hour, become one glowing mass, is a unique and glorious experience.' Other English travellers noted that it took five thousand rockets going up at one time to create the effect. They were fired from a revolving wheel, or girandola, after which the displays were named. Wright's painting depicts the Girandola celebrating the inauguration of Pope Pius VI in February 1775; he himself was quoted as saying that it was the 'greatest effect... of Art that I suppose can be.' [Elizabeth Einberg]

The most famous religious festival in Venice took place on Ascension Day, when the Doge travelled out to sea on the State Barge, the Bucintoro, to be symbolically married to the sea. This painting by Canaletto shows the Barge departing from the Molo, surrounded by gondolas and military vessels, and sped on its way by cannons, bells, trumpets and great crowds of spectators. The Doge and his retinue sailed out to the Lido, where the lagoon gives way to the open sea. Here the Sea Marriage took place, representing Venice's supremacy over the Adriatic and her oneness with the sea. As a final gesture, a gold ring was cast into the

water. [Giorgio Marini]

We left our Grand Tourists in Tivoli, preparing to travel south to Naples, then one of the most beautiful scenes in Italy, with the Bay in front and Mount Vesuvius in the background. But Naples had more than beauty of landscape: Grand Tourists were also stunned by the richness of the churches and the crowded conditions of the city - one tourist referred to it as a 'paradise inhabited by devils'. [Leonardo di Mauro] This painting of the eruption of Mt Vesuvius by moonlight was painted in 1774 by Pierre-Jacques Volaire. He specialised in these paintings, contrasting the hot reds of the lava flow with the cold light of the moon reflected in the still waters of the Bay of Naples. He composed his views from on-the-spot sketches, frequently showing contemporary figures gesturing in excitement or fleeing for shelter. [Einberg]

Here is another painting the 1774 eruption of Vesuvius, this one by Jakob Hackert. It is a remarkable close-up view of Vesuvius in action, showing the eruption of lava from the flank of the main cone of the volcano. Rather than celebrating dramatic effects, it shows groups of tourists and their Italian guides against the awesome natural spectacle. Its precise rendition of the subject contrasts with the previous painting by Volaire, dismissed by Hackert as devoted to crowd-pleasing bravura. [Einberg] This caricature of tourists fleeing Mt Vesuvius dates from 1810, but I could not resist putting it in, since it demonstrates that treating the volcano purely as a tourist attraction had its dangers.

The area around Naples was a mecca for Grand Tourists for reasons other than Vesuvius, and this was its reputation as a centre of the Antique. In 1738 and 1748 respectively, first Herculaneum and then Pompeii were discovered by men digging wells. Although the sites were closely guarded - the Italians did not want foreigners carrying off the finds - word leaked out, and in due course they could be visited. The fear of loss to foreigners, and especially to the British, was well-founded. As the art historian Francis Haskell has written, 'The acquisition of major antiquities was, indeed, the most obsessive (but also the most frustrating) ambition of all visitors to Italy.' Collectors could not acquire old ones, since they either belonged to the papacy - which in due course opened museums in Rome to display them - or their export was forbidden. The best hope for the British collector was to finance new excavations, but here, too, papal control was vigilant. Interestingly, it was the visit in 1763-1764 of the Duke of York, younger brother of George III, which opened the floodgates. The Duke, the first member of the royal family to visit Italy as a tourist, travelled incognito as the Earl of Ulster, but of course, Italian royals knew who he was. Even though he was not on official business, his presence on Italian soil signified, they thought, a sign of friendship, and their concern was to give tangible signs of friendship in return to the King of Great Britain. It was of no concern that the Duke was in Italy partly because of his opposition to his brother's policies. From the time of his visit onwards, excavations and export licences were generously released to the British in Rome. One art historian has claimed that 'No golden age of the Grand Tour would have existed were it not for the presence of royal travellers on Italian soil.... Royal travellers created the conditions for massive exports of works of art, for the expansion of collections and, above all, for the birth of museums all around Europe.' [Ilaria Bignamini]

The period 1764 to 1796, the heyday of the Grand Tour, coincided, then, with an unprecedented number of archaeological excavations in Rome and Latium, and a handful of Britons and Italians were responsible for 'the most successful series of diggings ever carried out on Italian soil'. [Bignamini and Ian Jenkins] Their discoveries fed the market with countless new marbles and other artefacts, which were added to the no less numerous marbles sold by old and new owners of Roman palaces and villas. This pen and ink by Henry Tresham shows a typical scene in Rome and Naples. In the middle of an archaeological dig, apparently a sizeable private house such as had been found in Herculaneum and Pompeii, tourists are grouped around a table examining the small bronzes, vases, busts, tripods, lamps and other finds that are being brought to them by the excavators. This caricature by Rowlandson of a cognoscenti contemplating the beauties of the antique, sends up a common type of Grand Tourist. With paintings of Roman worthies, such as Mark Antony in a British admiral's uniform, and of Vesuvius in the background, marbles on the table, and broken smaller finds on the floor, the Tourist is in his element: he can admire without exertion.

Here is a picture by an anonymous artist of an antiquary's shop in Naples. This is the quintessence of the

British tourist in a souvenir shop, and whether or not the goods were authentic was problematic. British tourists were famous all over Europe as the biggest, and sometimes stupidest, spenders in Italy - and in other territories invaded by them on their Grand Tours. It was said that if only it were portable, the Colosseum itself would have been carried off by an Englishman. Excavators worked hard to supply the market with antiquities, and when they began to run low during the latter years of the century, small workshops were set up to manufacture them. Because of course, tourists wanted souvenirs as tangible memories of their time on the Continent.

The growth of the Grand Tour during the second half of the eighteenth century created the conditions for the production of new fans especially designed for the tourist market. A large number of compositions were derived from souvenir prints of popular sites, notably views of Roman monuments and ruins; the picture here is of the Pantheon in the middle, flanked by the columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius. It is an ivory fan with pierced and carved sticks and guards, whilst the paintings are on double chicken-skin leaf. The tourist could purchase either a completed fan, or just the painted fan leaves, which were brought home in folders and mounted. [Bignamini] Another possible group of souvenirs might be a collection of cameos, mounted and catalogued.

But it was the major collectors who contributed most to the creation of memory, and the most substantial collector of them all was Charles Townley. Born the son of a rich Lancashire Catholic squire, who died when he was four years old, Townley spent his youth receiving a cosmopolitan education in Douai and Paris, before coming home to take up his inheritance. He spent the following decade living the boisterous life of a country gentleman, until in 1767, he set out on the journey that was to transform his life. He went on no fewer than three Grand Tours.

They coincided with a spate of frenetic activity in the antiques market, and Townley and his agents were sometimes in competition with the Pope's Antiquary, who had first refusal of new archaeological discoveries. Townley was unusual in his generation for his devotion to antiquarian pursuits. Unable because of his religion to take a prominent rôle in public life, his collecting became a full-time occupation. [Jenkins] This pen-and-ink with watercolour shows the entrance hall of his London house. His collecting was now over, and his house was now one of the sights of London, with visitors peering at the sculptures, consulting their guidebooks, and sketching. The hall is decorated in what was termed a strong archaeological red, and filled with chests, vases and sculptures. The centre of this group was the Sphinx next to the door. [Jenkins]

On 16 August 1781, Townley wrote to a friend that 'Mr Zoffany is painting in the stile of his Florence Tribune [the Tribuna], a room in my house, wherein he introduces what objects he chuses from my collection. It will be a picture of extraordinary effect and truth'. Zoffany had painted the Tribuna at the Uffizi which I showed earlier, and it had been exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1780. Townley had seen it, and it was probably his idea that the painter should paint something similar, although on a smaller scale, with his own collection and circle of friends. The painting is not a literal record of Townley's library - after all, most of the sculptures had been hauled in from other parts of the house - but it displays both the essence of his collection and the collector himself, seated on the right. As you gaze at the painting, you will probably recognise a number of the pieces, such as the Discobulus on the lower left, which had been discovered at Hadrian's Villa in 1791. These pieces are familiar because on Townley's death in 1805, the entire collection was acquired for the British Museum, their first major acquisition of classical sculpture.

And then came the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, and Grand Tours came to a shuddering halt. Travelling was dangerous again: some British tourists caught in France were interned for ten years, whilst another escaped capture only by hiding under a boat. There were exceptions: the distinguished scientist Sir Humphrey Davy, who demonstrated that iodine and chlorine are elements, was awarded a medal by Napoleon for the best work of the year in electricity, and, armed with a safe-conduct, travelled to Paris in 1813. But, nevertheless, most Britons stayed at home, and by the time the Napoleonic Wars were over, so was the habit of the Grand Tour.

But Britons were now attuned to travel which had as its point social and cultural enlightenment - to go for a holiday, rather than for work. They had discovered mountains, different ways of thinking and living, and non-portraiture art. They had brought back with them thousands of artefacts, sculptures and paintings, which adorned private and public collections alike - and some of which have been, and are now, flowing out of the country to other lands, much as they had flowed out of Italy to Great Britain in the first place. Best of all, Europe now meant more than wars: it could mean pleasure and enlightenment.

© Professor Kathleen Burk, 2005