



GARY GALYEAN'S GOLF LETTER®

THE INSIDE REPORT ON WORLD GOLF

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Dear Subscriber:

THE SEARCH FOR intriguing and compelling golf courses that lie off the trampled path can sometimes be accomplished by playing near where you will also find most of the masterpieces of Michelangelo Merisi, the true name of the artist who is now known as Caravaggio. The town of Caravaggio, where the artist was born, is located about 30 miles east of Milan, which is about 30 miles east of Villa d'Este. Hence, the premise that great art and notable golf are neighbors.

Why Caravaggio rather than Velázquez or da Vinci or Rembrandt? As suggested on these pages before, Caravaggio's idiosyncratic style absorbed the color and unfiltered drama of everyday life in the streets of Italy and applied it to his depictions of many of the moving stories from the Bible. His was a full and forceful Baroque departure from the polished and sophisticated paintings by the Mannerists of his time. He influenced the Baroque painters who followed him, such as Diego Velázquez.

Off canvas, his life was a full departure as well. Stefano Zuffi writes in his succinct narrative CARAVAGGIO published by Prestel in 2021:

With Caravaggio it is difficult to draw a clear distinction between art and life. The chiaroscuro of beauty and violence, genius and crime, permeates everything he did. Those who wrote about Caravaggio in his own day found it difficult to conceal their unease with a man who was famous as an artist and infamous as a flagrant sinner and criminal. Even his lonely death on the shore of the Tyrrhenian Sea under the searing July sun in 1610 may have seemed to many to be divine retribution for a misspent life.

We are suggesting that golf, as a pursuit of beauty and behavior, shares this same dilemma. So, the conjoining of Caravaggio and golf, while a startling pairing, is not illogical. The rough, natural drama of the master's canvases offers the same compelling intrigue and admiration as a masterfully made (and played) golf course.

Walking further out on this limb, we suggest that in the following excerpt from Mr. Zuffi's book, Alister MacKenzie's name could be substituted for Caravaggio's and the point would be equally made:

Caravaggio leaves us no choice: he touches us, forces us to take sides. In each painting he makes us an eye-witness to an event. He presents us with the gaping chasm between the human and the divine. The reality of his pictures draws us in a way that we cannot resist.

So, the idea is this: Beginning in Rome will describe some Italian trails that lead to the chapels, museums, and palazzi where Caravaggio's pictures hang—some obvious, others less so—the best golf courses that can be played near those places, and the best hotels near both.

While we begin in Italy, the global trail ultimately leads to 24 cities in 9 different countries—from Detroit to Potsdam to Palermo to St. Petersburg. Predominantly they are to be found in Italy, Malta, Sicily, and western Europe. Eight are located in the United States.

In 1457, more than a century before Caravaggio's birth (Sept. 29, 1571), the word *golf* first appeared in writing. King James II of Scotland issued an edict prohibiting the playing of *gowf* and football because they distracted from military preparation. Four years before Caravaggio's birth, Mary, Queen of Scots, was accused

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by her enemies of remorselessly playing golf when she should have been home mourning her husband's death.

Caravaggio's greatest masterpieces were produced during the last 11 years before his death, between 1599 and 1610. He was 38 years old when he died. As the singer and satirist Tom Lehrer once commented on stage: "It is sobering to remember that when Mozart was my age [45] he had already been dead for 10 years."

Twenty-two of Caravaggio's paintings can be found in Rome, three in Naples, five (plus some disputed attributions) in Florence, and two in Milan. The chart in the adjoining column lists the paintings and their locations in these four cities.

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BEGIN IN ROME to see roughly a third of Caravaggio's work that survives. We recommend three Roman hotels, the locations of which make walking possible and enjoyable to the Vatican, Galleria Borghese, Palazzo Barberini, Santa Maria del Popolo, San Luigi del Francesi, indeed all the locations where Caravaggios are hanging for public viewing.

J.K. Place is a small, fashionable hotel near the west end of Via Condotti and, therefore, just a few blocks from the Spanish Steps. It is well run, friendly and of a smaller scale than the other two.

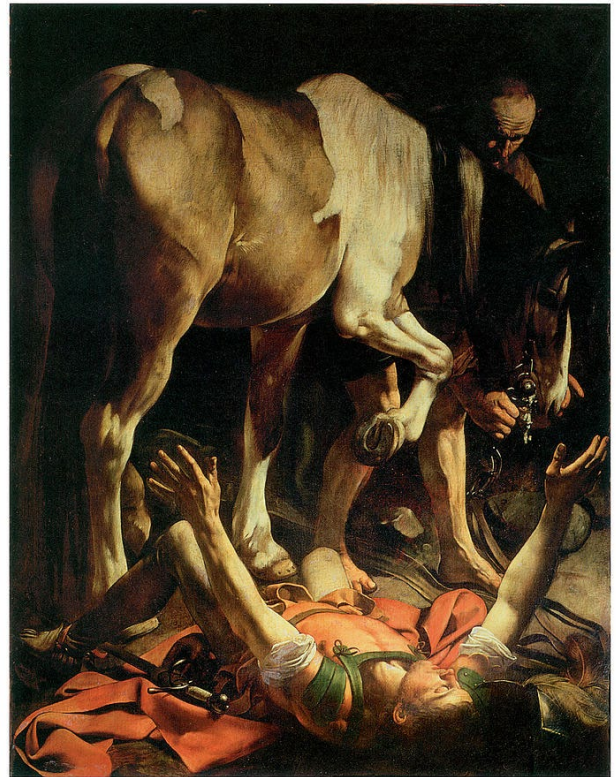
Hotel de Russie, a Rocco Forte property, is just a couple of blocks south from the Piazza del Popolo, where the church Santa Maria del Popolo is located. The hotel is beautiful and expertly operated. It is less intimate than J.K. Place and has all the expected amenities.

The inimitable Hassler, just at the top of the Spanish Steps, is known world wide for its service, dining, and quiet comfort.

Any of these hotels can arrange a Caravaggio guide to escort you to the ten different locations where the pictures hang. If the walking seems or becomes too much, there is an electric cart service that will trundle you through the city. Ask the concierge.

Marco Simone is undoubtedly the best golf in Rome. This is where the Ryder Cup Matches were played last fall. The club is located about half an hour's drive north-east of central Rome. Millions were spent to reinvent and rebuild the course for Italy's first hosting of the Ryder Cup. The publicity surrounding the competition has moved the green fees to €220 for 18 holes from February through August.

We recommend the visit to Naples to be undertaken as a day trip from Rome. Three Caravaggios can be



Caravaggio, *The Conversion of Saul*, 1600-1601

David with the Head of Goliath	Rome	Galleria Borghese
Saint Jerome (Writing) (there are 2)	Rome	Galleria Borghese
Saint John the Baptist	Rome	Galleria Borghese
Boy with a Basket of Fruit	Rome	Galleria Borghese
Self-Portrait as Bacchus/ Sick Bacchus	Rome	Galleria Borghese
Madonna of the Palafronieri	Rome	Galleria Borghese
Fortune-Teller (Gypsy)	Rome	Musei Capitolini
Saint John the Baptist	Rome	Musei Capitolini
Narcissus	Rome	Palazzo Barberini
Saint Francis in Meditation	Rome	Palazzo Barberini
Judith and [Beheading] Holofernes	Rome	Palazzo Barberini
John the Baptist in the Wilderness	Rome	Palazzo Corsini
Rest on the Flight to Egypt	Rome	Galleria Doria Pamphilj
St. John the Baptist (2 of the same; third at Capitolini)	Rome	Galleria Doria Pamphilj
Penitent Magdalen	Rome	Galleria Doria Pamphilj
Saint Matthew and the Angel (second version)	Rome	San Luigi dei Francesi
Calling of Saint Matthew	Rome	San Luigi dei Francesi
Martyrdom of Saint Matthew	Rome	San Luigi dei Francesi
Madonna of Loreto	Rome	Sant'Agostino
Crucifixion of Saint Peter	Rome	Santa Maria del Popolo
Conversion of Saint Paul (second version)	Rome	Santa Maria del Popolo
Entombment	Rome	Vatican Museum
Medusa	Florence	Gallerie degli Uffizi
Sacrifice of Isaac	Florence	Gallerie degli Uffizi
Bacchus	Florence	Gallerie degli Uffizi
Portrait of a Knight of Malta [Fra Antonio Martelli]	Florence	Palazzo Pitti
Sleeping Cupid	Florence	Palazzo Pitti
Still Life with a Basket of Fruit	Milan	Ambrosiana
Supper at Emmaus. (After revelation)	Milan	Pinacoteca di Brera
Martyrdom of Saint Ursula	Naples	Gallerie of Palazzo Zevallos Stigliano
The Flagellation of Christ	Naples	Gallerie Nazionali de Capodimonte
Seven Works of Mercy	Naples	Pio Monte della Misericordia

found in Naples. Two were painted following his escape to Spanish-controlled Naples following the murder of a man at night on a tennis court in Rome. The third was painted after he escaped from Malta after having been separated (de-knighted) from the Knights of St. John. Included in these three is the *Seven Works of Mercy* (1606), which some consider his greatest, most concentrated, and intricate picture.

Naples is a two-hour-plus drive from Rome; or the train takes about an hour. We recommend hiring a guide — perhaps through your hotel in Rome — to find the Caravaggios and gain easy access.

If you decide to spend the night(s) in Naples, the best golf is the **Golf Club Volturmo**. It is in a pine forest on the coast of the Tyrrhenian Sea about a 40-minute drive north of Naples. There are 18 holes and the green fee is €45-55 depending on the day or weekend.

TO FLORENCE: From Rome take the fast, non-stop train from Roma Termini to Florence S.M. Novella. It is a 90 minute ride and there are four levels of service. Go to <https://www.italotreno.it> for schedules and fares.

Florence is so small (compared to Rome) that everything seems nearby. If you prefer to be on the Arno, we recommend **Hotel Lungarno**; if you prefer the center of town, **Hotel Savoy** — another Rocco Forte property — is just a couple of blocks from the Duomo.

Three Caravaggios hang in the Uffizi Gallery and two more at the Palazzo Pitti. You will also find two or three unauthenticated, or least challenged, pictures attributed to Caravaggio. It is important to remember, as you pursue the viewing of Caravaggio's work, that his dramatic style became so fashionable that it spawned a group of *Caravaggisti* who emulated or outright copied the original paintings.

The British brought golf to Florence in 1889. Its evolution there produced **Golf Ugolino (aka Circolo Golf Ugolino)**—a 25-minute drive south from the center of Florence. The club has hosted the Italian Open. A golf course that may be difficult to resist based solely on its name is the **Golf Club Lamborghini**, about a 2-hour drive southeast of Florence. This is a 9-hole course that can be played by visitors on any day for a green fee of €40-50.

TO MILAN: Back on the fast train non-stop, 90 minutes from Florence to Milano Centrale which is an 18-minute cab ride to the **Four Seasons** located on Via Gesù. The hotel is a 15-minute walk to the two Caravaggios at the Pinacoteca di Brera and Pinacoteca Ambrosiana. Also within walking range are the Teatro

alla La Scalla, the Duomo, the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele, the Maurizio Gucci assassination site, et al. Only the Cenacolo Vinciano, where you will find Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper*, is a little farther — a 30-minute walk.

Tickets for the museums and the Last Supper can, and should be, purchased well ahead of time in order to fix a convenient time of entry.

The Caravaggio at the **Pinacoteca (art gallery) di Brera** is his second painting of *Supper in Emmaus*. It was painted in 1606 five years after his first version, which hangs in the National Gallery in London.

The difference between the two is breathtaking in its subtlety. According to the Bible story [Luke 24 13:32] Jesus was not recognizable to the apostles while they talked and walked from Jerusalem to Emmaus the day after his crucifixion. At a supper table that evening Jesus remained unrecognized until he took bread, blessed, and broke it. It was after breaking the bread that he was revealed to the apostles.

Caravaggio's first painting of the scene at the table is *before* Jesus breaks the bread (it is whole and lying on the table); the second is *after* (the bread lies broken on a dish on the table). The Lord's countenance reflects this timing. In the first, he is healthy and robust; in the second he reflects the draining of his strength by his hideous death.

Milan's second Caravaggio hangs at the **Pinacoteca Ambrosiana** and is titled *Still Life with a Basket of Fruit*. The basket is placed on the edge of a wooden ledge and extends slightly beyond the ledge. An identical and identically-perched basket of fruit is on the table in Caravaggio's first *Supper in Emmaus*. Prints of this basket painting hang in hundreds of restaurants and hotels.

Golf in and near Milano is very good. **Golf Club Milano** was found in 1928 and has hosted the Italian Open nine times. There are 27 holes that can be played in any combination. The parkland holes are relatively flat and run through a mature forest that isolates them from noise. Indeed, it is said that the quiet while playing is only broken when racing is underway at the famous nearby Monza Circuit.

The best golf in all of Italy is found an hour's drive north of Milan at **Golf Club Villa d'Este**. While sharing the same name with the famous hotel on Lake Como, the Club is a separate entity seven miles away and at a higher elevation. The golf club was owned by the hotel until the late 1970s.

The Club is widely recognized as the best golf in the country. Their clubhouse is our favorite in the world!

We previously wrote:

At the Golf Club Villa d'Este, tired and becoming listless, we dropped into a canvas chair following completion of the morning's round. We sat shielded from the bright sunshine by a high, brown and white striped awning and cooled by a balmy breeze which had found its way from the snowy Alps, across Lake Como, and through the birch and pine trees to the rough-hewn stone terrace which overlooks the 18th green. ...

The Club was built in 1929 at an altitude of 1,200 ft. just beyond Lake Montorfano within a thick forest of chestnut, pine, and birch trees. There are nine comfortable and attractive guest cottages on the Club grounds.

Approaching by car, the drive way follows the par-5 1st hole and arrives at the upper level of the two-story clubhouse where an attendant takes your clubs and parks the car. Like most buildings in this part of Italy, it is an ochre-colored, stucco structure with a tile roof. There is a warm patina to the walls and furnishings.



Golf Club Villa d'Este - Montorfano, Como, Italy

Similar to Hawaii, the hall and stairways are covered, but large open archways allow the mountain air to move through the rooms. On the arrival level, running the length of the structure, are the lounge, bar, and dining rooms. Each has a wall of glass affording views of the forest, the pre-Alpine mountains laced with precarious roads and dotted with stucco villas, and the distant Alps. Also, each opens onto the stone terrace furnished with

teak wood chairs and tables decorated with pink geraniums. A simple and superb luncheon is served al fresco on pink tablecloths beneath the striped awnings at a leisurely pace by the northern Italian service staff.

The men's locker room is filled with louvered, dark brown, wooden lockers with brass fittings. The floor is covered with sisal carpeting, and there are

ceiling height windows running the length of the room washing it in sunlight. The wonderfully excessive plumbing fixtures authenticate the 1920s construction.

The Club's 18 holes are beautiful, challenging (slope 129 - par 69), and have tested the Italian Open field 12 times. The green fee is €120 and may fluctuate according to the time of year. It will speak to you. While this is not Irish or British links golf, the Villa d'Este satisfies other pleasing inclinations where golf is included ... and then there are always the Caravaggios just around the bend.

For J.B.D.:



Diego Rodríguez de Silva y Velázquez, the most admired, perhaps the greatest, European painter who ever lived, possessed a miraculous gift for conveying a sense of truth.

Influenced by the naturalism of Caravaggio, [in The Supper at Emmaus] he [Velázquez] portrayed Christ and two of his disciples with dramatic facial expressions, sharply lit against a plain background, the forms solidly modeled in somber colors.

Everett Fahy

Department of European Paintings
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Yours very truly,

Gary A. Galyean

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OUR 35TH YEAR

Dear Subscriber:

THE GOLF LETTER is improving its delivery and billing systems. The new system will deliver the newsletter as an e-mail rather than a PDF *attached* to an e-mail. Less cumbersome.

The new service is called SUBSTACK and may be used by many of you already. Publishers such as Bloomberg and John Ellis' NEWS ITEMS use SUBSTACK because of its ease and dependability.

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Gary Galyean
Editor and Publisher