

# A LITERARY ITINERARY FULVIO TOMIZZA



## ITINERARY 3 Umag - Umago [4 km]



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After passing through the residential areas of Muiela and Pozioi, take the southern promenade leading to Umag old town, called Riva Sv. Pelegrin (S. Pellegrino)

### 9. SAN PELLEGRINO PROMENADE

The dwellings located along the promenade, known as San Pellegrino, were built on the southern side of the city walls after 1380, when peace between the Maritime Republics of Genoa and Venice put an end to the threat of a sea invasions.

From the promenade you can see the beach known, until the end of the Forties, as *Bagno San Marco*, a bathing spot run by the Coslovich family. Once there, the most outstanding feature in the background is the red brick tall chimney stack of the food processing factory, established in 1910 by the Manzutto family. Originally it was called *Stabilimento Agricolo Industriale Istria S.p.A. Umago*, later simplified to *Stabilimento Arrigoni*. In the Fifties the factory was nationalised and today it is owned by the biggest Croatian food processing industry, *Podravka*, based in Koprivnica.

*In Umago, the new regime had done great things: besides enlarging the Arrigoni factory, renamed "Dragonja", it had built a dye factory, a pasta factory, a cement factory at Punta della Vacche (which they claimed to be one of the biggest in Europe), a new wine shop, and the distilleries of Vino Export."*

(Materada, Northwestern University Press, 1999 – translation by Russell Scott Valentino; p 108)

### 10. THE HISTORIC CENTRE, THE MUSEUM, DIGA PIER

The city Museum, located at the end of the promenade, is the oldest and best preserved building of the original urban settlement of Umago. It was intended as a defensive tower whose original battlement is still visible under the current roof. At a later stage the tower was extended and became the summer residence of the bishop of Trieste.

The existing doorway at the ground floor used to lead to the pier and the sea, as the row of houses continued uninterrupted to the right of the building. The construction of the pier started in 1825, with the local stones transported to the site by fishermen in their boats.

*For me Umago is the most beautiful place in the world: the sea flowing in between two promontories, right up to the houses – there's nothing like it in the world. No wonder tourists have been flocking there from all over since*

*they put up the new hotels. But while the heart and soul of the place used to be the pier, the church, and Mrs. Nina's hotel, it has now shifted to Punta, where the new hotels rise out of the woods and the rocks.*

*Today the old town is completely abandoned. Everyone's left, as if they didn't care about the new town or knew it hadn't been built for them.*

(Materada, Northwestern University Press, 1999 – translation by Russell Scott Valentino; pp 108-109)

The itinerary continues through Riječka Ulica to Trg Slobode (Via Fiume to Piazza Libertà). Along the way, the buildings of the old town still display traces of Gothic and Renaissance architecture.

### 11. PIAZZA LIBERTÀ

*"Frankly, bare and essential but centrally positioned, the square displays everything that is beautiful and old: the marble clad facade of the Duomo, the ample, unadorned public cistern, the oblong shape of the Casa del Capitano Veneto building, and the house decorated with unusual original windows, stained by the indelible red soil. On one side it reaches the harbour, which in turn opens onto the bay all the way to Punta and on the other side to a more mysterious sea which laps under the white city walls. Perhaps, Saint Peregrine was the first to dip his dust covered feet in those waters.*

(F. Tomizza in „Piazze Istriane“, Galleria Dante Marino Cettina, Umago 1995)



### THE PARISH CHURCH

The church in Umago is dedicated to the Assumption of the Madonna and St. Peregrine, protector of the city and was built on the remains of the collegiate church of Santa Maria Maggiore, which was damaged by a storm in 1651. The construction works commenced in 1730 on the project of Piranese architect Giovanni Dongetti and the church was consecrated in 1760. This was the first example of late-Palladian church built in the 18th century in Venetian Istria. The bell tower, 33 metres high, rises to the side of the church. It was built in the 1400s and renovated in 1691. At the bottom of the bell tower there is the communal cistern built in 1667 which at one time would fill up with the water flowing from the roof of the church.

*The duomo would intimidate me, so vast and imposing, with the columns separating the aisles, the side altars and the stained glass above the central altar, hosting the remains of a saint. So different from our little church, which so sunny and clean, where, on stepping in you felt you were bringing something to it. Here you sensed you were being watched, non only by God,*

*but also by every piece of furnishing. Although lately I found it rather empty and therefore more constraining.*

*(La miglior vita, Rizzoli Editore, Milano 1977, p.220)*

Originally the city hall with an attached loggia and the warehouse, were located opposite the church, but they were destroyed in a fire in 1924. At the time the the bas-relief of the winged lion of St. Mark's, which is now on the bell tower, was placed on the front of the city hall. After the fire, the city hall moved to the building on the left of the church, where some of the council department still operate.

*The line at the town hall came down the steps and all the way out to the gate; and everyone in it was waiting to appear before the windows of the emigration office. But things were moving along fast, and people were pushing their way up the stairs. They were from Giubba and Salvore, from Seghetto, Gezzi and Madonna del Carso. From our parts I saw only Mario Farletta, from Grotta, though he hadn't seen me yet.*

*(Materada, Northwestern University Press, 1999 – translation by Russell Scott Valentino; p 109)*

From the square continue along Ulica (Via) Garibaldi where on the left, there is a red triangular shaped building which used to be one of the defensive towers in Umag. At the end of Ul. Garibaldi, across the street, stands the church of S. Rocco (1514). Continue walking along Trovačka street (via Commerciale) to the "Ante Babić" Open University building. The city library is located on the ground floor, while the Italian Community "Fulvio Tomizza" is situated on the far right of the building.

## 12. THE LIBRARY

Established in 1957, the public library has always been a meeting point for European writers and intellectuals. The best example of this kind of meetings is the *Forum Tomizza – International Border Meetings*, organised together with the Culture Club from Koper and the Gruppo 85 from Trieste. The event started in the year 2000, organised by Milan Rakovac with the objective of creating a forum where borderland writers and artists could exchange opinions and experiences inspired by the life and works of Fulvio Tomizza. The meetings normally occur at the end of May, and are held between Umago, Trieste and Koper. The library is also involved in curating the publishing of writings regarding the local territory and the translations in Croatian of Tomizza's novels.

## 13. THE ITALIAN COMMUNITY „FULVIO TOMIZZA“

The historical Italian Community „Fulvio Tomizza“ in Umago is one of the 50 Italian Communities joining the Unione Italiana di Fiume (Italian Union in Fiume-Rijeka) which is the main organisation for the Italian national group residing in Croatia and Slovenia. In Umago territory there are three

further Italian Communities: Salvore, Matterada-Giurizzani and San Lorenzo-Babici.

The original name of the Community in Umago was Circolo di Cultura Italiana (Italian Cultural Circle) and it was founded in November 1947, the year of the Paris Peace Treaties when, on the 10<sup>th</sup> February, the Free Territory of Trieste was formed, divided in two administrative zones, A and B. After these events, the Italian nationals, which had always represented the majority of the population, found themselves in the minority. Therefore the main aim of the Italian Circles, and nowadays Communities, is to enhance and promote the Italians' role in the local cultural identity; to encourage dialogue, mutual respect, traditional values, unity and strength among the people in the territory. In 2002, the Italian Community in Umago decided to call itself "Fulvio Tomizza".

*Should the minorities settle for a marginal role and a consequent subordinate position?*

*No. They have a legitimate right to fight, preferably with their sensitivity and reason in order to achieve not only dignity, understanding, sympathy and, the always suspicious, apology from the other side, but also to attain total equality.*

*...to meet, to talk to each other, to discover a new reality, and to engage in debates with topics of mutual interest, to eat together, to get to know each other better by visiting places recommended in that new region and comparing them with what we have left behind, reciprocate hospitality, strengthen contacts and create new relationships. These are the prerequisites and the first steps for what in other circumstances I called „the chain of the minorities “. Promoted by educated men, and then energised by the common people, who are nearly always well intended people.*

*...This is a delicate matter. A man who takes this path needs to be, if not special, at least a man of integrity; and an honest man, who wouldn't hide behind the thin veil of his own interests, his ambitions, his own narcissism.*

*... I believe it is easier to find such a man in the pockets of a minority group rather than on the stage of the majority.*

*(Fulvio Tomizza: Soggezione, il destino delle minoranze, Alle spalle di Trieste, Bompiani, Milano, 1955, p.p., 235 - 236.)*

To continue towards Salvore from the Italian Community, cross the new Piazza take the passage leading to the promenade and follow it in Punta direction.