

VENICE DESTINATION GUIDE

Contents - clickable links

[Overview and Orientation 2](#)

[Practical Information 3](#)

[Sights in Venice 12](#)

[Saint Mark's Square 12](#)

[St. Mark's Basilica 17](#)

[David's Tour of the Basilica San Marco 18](#)

[The Doge's Palace \(Palazzo Ducale\) 23](#)

[David's Doge's Palace Tour 24](#)

[Museo Civico Correr 35](#)

[Campanile 35](#)

[Galleria dell' Accademia 36](#)

[Santa Maria Glorioso dei Frari 36](#)

[The Jewish Ghetto 39](#)

[Arsenale 40](#)

[Rialto Bridge 40](#)

ISLANDS

[Murano 41](#)

[Burano 42](#)

[Torcello 42](#)

[Brief History of Venice 43](#)

[Shopping 45](#)

[Rialto Market 45](#)

[Entertainment and Outdoor Activities 46](#)

VENICE DESTINATION GUIDE



Overview and Orientation

A visit to Venice deserves at least a day and a half and two nights. I suggest an early afternoon arrival in Venice, find your hotel and check-in. Then, grab a canal-side seat, a slice of pizza, and take in the commerce on the Grand Canal.

Later, stroll to the Piazza San Marco and see the sights there. Make your plans for the following day deciding when to visit the Basilica, Doge's Palace, Campanile, and museums. Then wander the route leading to the Rialto Bridge stopping at the shops and savoring the local culture.

At nightfall find a spot to have dinner and then end your day sitting on Piazza San Marco sip-

ping a drink while listening to one of the musical ensembles.

Day two should include seeing the sights, getting lost in the neighborhoods, and maybe even a ride out to the nearby islands of Murano, Burano or Torcello. Cap off the evening with a gondola ride. The next morning float out of Venice and on to your next destination.

Many tour groups visit Venice in just one day, arriving by 10:00 a.m. and leaving by 6:00 p.m. Ninety percent of Venice's tourists are floated in, shown a pre-determined list of sights, and then floated out before dark. If possible, spend the extra time and money to stay on the island or the nearby lido and experience the city.

Practical Information

Getting to and from Venice

Venice is connected to the mainland by a long causeway. The town of Mestre is located on the mainland side of the causeway. Mestre has lots of parking and inexpensive hotels but lacks the ambiance of Venice. Don't stop here, even if you are pinching pennies and are in search of cheaper sleeps! Consider making the nearby town of Padua your "home base" and take a train to Venice for the day. Alternatively, you might consider staying on the Lido di Venezia (the beach area just to the east of Venice) and taking the water taxi to Venice.

Whether traveling independently, or in a group, swap out your heavy suitcase for a lighter bag, taking just the items you'll need during your stay in Venice. You'll be thankful as you make your way by boat and/or foot into town.

By Plane

From Marco Polo International Airport, it's a 20-minute ride by land taxi or the airport bus to Piazzale Roma. To purchase tickets for the airport bus, look for the ATVO ticket counter or ticket machines in baggage claim. Tickets are €8 one way, €15 roundtrip. To take a land taxi, follow the signs on the arrivals level. Taxis cost €40.

To reach the nearby islands or other historic destinations, you can take the Alilaguna airport boat. Ask at the ticket booth for the best route based on your destination. Tickets are €8 one way, €15 roundtrip and include one suitcase and one carry-on. Water taxis are also available and average more than €100 for central Venice. Purchase tickets at the water-taxi ticket booths in the arrival area, then take the moving sidewalk to the boat piers.

Luggage storage is located in the arrival area, near the post office.

By Train

Trains connect Mestre with Venice's Santa Lucia station. If traveling to Venice by train, do not get off at Venice-Mestre, instead go to the end of the line and get off at Venezia Santa Lucia.

Upon arrival at Santa Lucia Station head outside to the dock and catch vaporetto #1 or #2 to the city center. It is a scenic 30-minute cruise up the Grand Canal to San Marco. The station has luggage storage, but it moves around because of station renovation. As of Spring 2016, it was near Track 1. Cost: €6/5 hrs.; €11/24 hrs. Open daily 06:00-23:00. Alternatively, you can walk to the San Marco/Accademia area in about 45 minutes.

If you are visiting one of the outer islands or simply do not want to travel the Grand Canal, take the vaporetto #5.1, #5.2 or #4.1, #4.2 to skip the traffic on the Grand Canal. Study the boat routes to determine which vaporetto to take.

By Bus

The bus station is located at Piazzale Roma, across the Grand Canal from Santa Lucia Station. It is a large open square. Head to the dock and catch vaporetto #1 or #2 to the city center. There are ticket offices and areas to store your luggage around the square. You can also cross the canal to the Santa Lucia train station and store your luggage there.

By Car

If arriving by automobile, you'll be channeled across the causeway and into parking lots with vacancy. Just follow the green traffic signals. Most likely you'll end up in the multi-storied Tronchetto parking facility (€30+ per day).

Plan ahead and ask your hotel for a discount voucher which could save you up to 50%. After parking, leave the garage (avoid the con-artist offering you a water taxi to San Marco) and head toward the water and the vaporetto #1 or #2 dock for boats to the city center (€7.50 one-way to any stop on the line).

By Cruise Ship

The Venice Cruise Terminal is located near the Tronchetto parking facility. Many cruise ships offer free shuttles to Piazzale Roma. Alternatively, you can take the cable tram called the People Mover. From there, you can catch the vaporetto #1 to the city center or walk (30-40 minutes).

Luggage can be stored in the Marittima and San Basilio buildings. Office are usually open when cruise ships arrive and depart but may vary by season or day.

Getting around Venice

The city of Venice is on an island, isolated from the mainland, and surrounded by water. When seen from the air, Venice resembles the body of a fish. The Grand Canal flows through this fish-shaped island entering at the mouth (Tronchetto) and emptying out at the tail near Piazza San Marco.

Forget about addresses and street names. Venice is a maze of canals, alleyways, bridges, campi, and dead ends. Orient yourself by knowing major landmarks. Piazza San Marco

at the tail, the Rialto Bridge represents the belly, and the train station is at the mouth. With this, set off to find your own little niche of Venice.

Walking

Navigate by landmarks not street names. Look up, find a bell tower or church spire and use it for orientation and direction. Yes, you'll get lost, but it's safe. And you'll discover what most tourists miss: the local's un-touristy version of Venice.

The main “walkable” tourist routes are usually well marked. At major squares and intersections, a yellow sign can be found (look at the second story level on building corners) giving directions to major sights.

The most common are:

- per San Marco, to Saint Mark's Square
- per Accademia, to the Accademia
- per Rialto, to the Rialto Bridge
- per Ferrovia, to the train station
-

Follow the crowds and signs and you'll only get a little bit lost. To ask for directions, say: “dov'e San Marco?” (dough-veh san mar-ko) and follow the direction in which the person points. Wander a little bit in that direction and ask someone else the same question. Eventually you will end up back in St. Mark's Square.

By Boat

Vaporetto (pl. vaporetti)

Venice's canals are filled with passenger boats making scheduled stops along the major canal routes. These vaporetti are inexpensive, will cut down on a whole lot of walking, and will provide wonderful views of the city from the lagoon. It's €7 for any stop on the line, but see the Hello Venezia Pass info below if you plan to take more than one trip. Buy your tickets at the booths near the vaporetto dock.

The Hello Venezia Visitor Travel Card is the way to go when traveling around Venice. These cards can be purchased at most vaporetti piers and tourist offices. Be sure to validate it each time you board by touching it to the white ticket machine on the dock. Visit the ACTV website for complete information. <http://www.actv.it>

€20 — 1 Day/24 hours

€30 — 2 Days/48 hours

€40 — 3 Days/72 hours

€60 — 7 Days

There are several different vaporetti lines, but for most the #1 and #2 are all that matter. Determining the direction of travel can sometimes be a problem. Normally, there will be two stations (docks) at each stop. One station is for the direction toward San Marco (per San Marco) and one docks for travel toward Tronchetto (per Tronchetto). But like most things in Italy,

this is not always so. I've taken what I thought was the right boat only to find it was going in the wrong direction. If in doubt, ask the attendant in a questioning tone, "per San Marco, or per Rialto" to verify the vaporetto stops where you want to get off. But don't be alarmed if you make a mistake. The worst that can happen is you'll see something you had not expected. Enjoy the ride, get off at the last stop, or when the driver kicks you out. Catch another boat back to your destination and try to get it right the next time around.

The Vaporetti #1 is the slow boat, taking 45 minutes to cruise the length of the Grand Canal. It makes every stop allowing an in-depth look at the city from the canal.

Vaporetti #2 is the fastest boat, making only a few stops along the Grand Canal. This boat takes about 25 minutes from one end to the other. The stops are: Tronchetto (parking lot), Piazzale Roma (bus station), Ferrovia (train station), Rialto Bridge, San Tom  (Church of the Frari), the Accademia Bridge, and San Marco.

Traghetto (pl. Traghetto)

Locals and savvy travelers take advantage of these little gondola boats to ferry them across the Grand Canal. Their docking locations are marked on most good maps. Making use of the traghetto can save time by cutting out a lot of walking to reach one of the three bridges cross-

ing the Grand Canal (€2 per ride).

Water Taxi

The canals of Venice are loaded with speedboat-like taxis ready to whisk you effortlessly to your destination. These fancy speedboat taxis can be found moored at most busy points along the Grand Canal. Although quite pricey (€30-40), they can be economical for small groups or those with lots of luggage. An added bonus is you get a local as your private “tour guide” and the best views of the city. Prices can be soft; negotiate and settle on a price before you step into the boat.

[Hop-on-Hop-off Buses](#)

There is a hop-on-hop-off boat in Venice. However, the prices are comparable to the Hello Venezia Visitor Travel Card but there are only 6 stops. From April through October, it includes a second line that travels to Murano, Torcello and Burano. Tickets can be booked at [viator.com](#).

[River Cruises](#)

There are a number of river cruises, dinner cruises, sunset cruises, gondola rides and walking tours available for advanced purchase on [viator.com](#).

Tourist Information

[City Pass](#)

You can also purchase Venezia Unica city passes. Purchase combination transportation, muse-

and children passes or personalize your card by selecting the attractions you want to visit. Cards loaded with your passes can then be picked up at ACTV ticket machines or at the many points of sale in the city. Find more information at veneziaunica.it/en/.

Church Attire

Conservative dress is required to enter churches in Venice. Your clothing must cover your shoulders and knees. In addition, you will be required to leave backpacks and large bags (including large purses) by the cloakroom in museums and many churches.

Museum Reservations

Venice is a very popular destination, and there are always lines for many tourist destinations, like Saint Mark's Basilica. Book in advance, either with the city pass mentioned above or on the official websites to skip the lines.

Other Useful Information

Post Office

There is a post office in Saint Mark's Square, across from the Basilica. It is open from Monday to Friday from 8:30 am to 6:00 pm and Saturday from 8:30 am to 1:00 pm.

Hospitals

There is one hospital on the island. It is located north of Saint Mark's Basilica.

Ospedale SS Giovanni e Paolo
Sestiere Castello, 6777, 30122
Venezia VE, Italy

Pharmacy

There is a pharmacy near the Rialto bridge. Cross the bridge to the east side of the canal and follow the road (with your back to the bridge) until you come to an open square. You'll see Farmacia Morelli straight ahead. Open Monday-Saturday 8:30am-7:30pm

Laundry

Coin Laundry

Via Lepanto, 78, 30126

Lido di Venezia

Open daily 08:00-21:00

In Lido, self-service

Lavanderia Gabriella

S. Marco, 985, 30124

Open Monday-Friday 8:00-12:30

Near Saint Mark's, drop off

Bathroom Facilities

The train stations in Venice have nice, clean toilet facilities that will cost about €1.50. Museums have public toilets as well. Look for the universal icons pointing the way.

Sights in Venice

Saint Mark's Square

Piazza San Marco is the heart of Venice, surrounded by luxurious shops, famous cafes, a medieval church, and an important palace, it is no wonder you'll find every tourist looking up, jaw ajar, and camera in hand. By day it is crowded with tourists, pigeons, and vendors

all out to get their share of the Piazza. But stay awhile, let the sun set, the tourists leave, and the orchestras tune-up. Then, the piazza becomes a lively concert venue with four “dueling” ensembles.

Poking around the Piazza

Walk over to the Basilica and turn around looking into the square. Here you’ll find the only true “square” in Venice. All the other open spaces of Venice are called Campi or Campielli (the smaller ones). Only St. Mark’s Square is called a Piazza. This is one of Europe’s grandest public places. The Piazza San Marco showcases four unique architectural styles taking us visually through one thousand years of Venetian architecture. It reaches the length of two football fields and is surrounded by the offices of the most important citizens of the republic known as Procuratie.

With your back to the church, look to the right and find the “old office buildings” which define the northern edge of the piazza. These were built in the 16th century (Renaissance) era. Notice their classic columns, two story design, and plain decorations. Compare this with the lavishly decorated “new office buildings” to your left. These were built in the 18th-century Baroque era. Now check out the “offices” in front of you framing the western end of the piazza. These, built by Napoleon in the late 19th century, are in the neo-Classical style and symbolize a return to the order and symmetry of

ancient Rome and Greece.

Now turn around and look at the Basilica.

Work was begun in A.D.828. It is a mixture of many styles because it took over a century to complete. Notice the architectural influences gleaned from the Venetian's trade connections with Byzantium (present day Istanbul). The multiple domes, rounded arches, pointed gables, banded columns, and detailed mosaics are just some of the unique characteristics of the Basilica.

Look over to the right at the Renaissance clock tower. Notice the bronze men swinging hammers to strike the hour. The tower was built in 1496 by the Ranieri brothers. They received a huge financial reward for their efforts, but legend has it that the political leaders plucked their eyes out to prevent them from repeating their work in another town. The clock tower marks the entrance to the Mercerie, a street lined with shops, stretching from San Marco to the Rialto Bridge.

Take a look at the bell tower (campanile). It rises 325 ft. above the piazza and has long been considered the symbol of Venice. The present tower is a careful reconstruction of the original 15th-century tower, which collapsed in 1902. See the small square to your left, leading out to the lagoon. This is known as the Piazzetta. Framed by the Renaissance building on the right and the Doge's Palace on the left, this

makes for a grand entrance into St. Mark's Square. The tall red granite columns near the water were imported from the Orient in 1172 and have stood here ever since.

The column on the right holds a statue of San Teodoro. St. Teodoro was Venice's original patron saint. The statue was cobbled together with pieces of Roman sculpture. St. Theodore is standing atop a dragon, which legend holds he slayed. Many people, especially those from Florida, think the creature is an alligator from the swampy areas around Venice. Poor old St. Theodore was booted out as patron saint when the bones of St. Mark were imported to Venice.

The column on the left (closest to the Doge's Palace) holds the Winged Lion. It too was imported from the Orient and adopted as the symbol of St. Mark the Evangelist and the Republic of Venice. Between the two columns, those condemned to death were once publicly strung up and executed.

At the point where the Basilica intersects with the Doge's Palace you can find a little group of red men huddled together. They are known as The Tetrachs and date from the 4th century. They were imported from Egypt or Syria and represent four warriors from the Roman Empire of Diocletian. No one really knows why they were stuck here.

The Piazza San Marco has a lot to offer. It is no

wonder that tourists for centuries have been enamored with this “grand drawing room” of Europe. Now that you are oriented, here are a few things you’ll not want to miss.

Gelato: Over to the left of the clock tower (under the porch of the offices) is a shop that sells great gelato. Although it is a bit pricey, this place sells the real stuff, not a cheap imitation. On sunny mornings, wander over to the shady area by the fountain, just to the north of San Marco. Grab a seat on the cool marble steps, savor your gelato, and take in the sights and sounds of the piazza.

Tourist Information: There are two TI’s nearby. Standing with your back to the church look for the passageway leaving the piazza on the far left. The TI’s is in this passageway (open daily 09:00-17:00).

There are **Public toilets** nearby (cost is about €1, open 08:00-21:00). To find the WC, leave the piazza through the walkway near the TI, turn to the right and follow the “Albergo Diorino” sign marked on the pavement. The other TI is on the lagoon. Leave the piazza and walk toward the lagoon. At the water, turn right. There is a WC here, too. (09:00-19:00).

An evening of dueling orchestras—For the price of a drink (about €10), you can have a comfortable seat and table for the entire evening on the piazza. Grab a table, the waiter will bring a menu, place your order, and enjoy the dueling orchestras. This experience is a little pricey, but you can’t have this experience anywhere else in the world.

St. Mark's Basilica

Saint Mark's Basilica combines both Byzantine (eastern) and western styles. It is an odd mix of architectural styles comparable to no other church in Europe. Construction was carried out during the 11th century and its consecration was in October 8, 1094. Since then, each successive Doge has added to this mix by installing pillars, mosaics, arches, doors, columns, and statues. The Basilica houses the bones of Saint Mark, the Evangelist. A disciple of Christ, St. Mark is best known for his chronicles of Christ's life found in the New Testament.

The church is built on the plan of a Greek cross, four equal sections forming a "plus sign." Western Christianity tends to focus much attention on the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ. This is why from Paris to Rome you will see churches loaded with crucifixes and images of Jesus' death. Eastern Christians tend to place more emphasis on Jesus' resurrection. Look around St. Mark's, you won't see many crucifixes. As you travel around Europe, notice the basic floor plan design of churches you visit. The majority will be built on the Latin cross design (in the shape of a crucifix). It is not until you get to Venice, and points further east, that you see the Greek cross design as here in St. Mark's.

Appropriate dress is required in order to vis-

it the Basilica. The guards at the door are adamant in enforcing the strict dress code. Countless tourists are turned away each day because they show up in shorts, tank tops, or bare too much flesh. Wear appropriate attire or you too will be denied entrance.

Bags must be left at Ateneo San Basso (Piazzetta dei Leoncini, in front of the Gate of Flowers, north façade).

In the peak tourist season the line to get in can stretch to the lagoon. Go early (by 9:45) to beat the tourist crowds arriving from the mainland by boat or go later in the afternoon. Free reservations are available at <https://www.venetoin-side.com/>. Simply printout the form with your entry time and present it at the door to the left of the general entry. (free admission, Mon-Sat 09:30-17:00; Sun 14:00-17:00, no photos, appropriate dress required).

David's Tour of the Basilica San Marco

Take a look at the outside. Notice the façade, sporting five large doorways decorated with lots of marble and sculptures, it represents several centuries of decoration. The central doorway has three arches with shallow-carved reliefs in a Byzantine-Romanesque style. Above the doorways are copies of the famous four bronze horses of Venice (more about these later). Finally notice the last doorway on the left depicting, in vivid mosaic, the coffin of St. Mark being carried into the church.

eNow, get in line, walk past the men checking for proper attire (hopefully you'll make it) and head inside, turn right and go underneath the last dome.

The Atrium might be roped off, but you can still see most of the artwork. The mosaics you see here are all made of tiny pieces of glass set in wet plaster. St. Mark's is famous for this type of artwork and you will find some of its best and oldest located here in the Atrium. Mosaics (as with other medieval artwork) were considered high-tech visual teaching aides for the common people. Without the ability to read or write, this served as a perfect medium to tell Biblical stories and spread Christianity to the people. Facing the church, look up, and you will see the story of Adam and Eve as it unfolds in the bottom ring of mosaics. Now, facing the Piazza, look on the arch above you and find the story of Noah and the great flood. Notice also on the entrance door from the Atrium to the Basilica the image of Jesus with the hand of God blessing all who enter.

□ Leave the Atrium and go into the Basilica. There is a lot to see here, but we'll just concentrate on a few special areas. Walk toward the altar and notice the Greek cross floor plan. Notice the central dome with its arms, or transepts, radiating out to equal lengths and capped off by smaller domes. Ponder all the tiny pieces of glass making up the mosaics on the Basilica's ceilings. Do you get a sense of "awestruck

by gold?”

Look at the floor, no doubt you’ve noticed it is uneven, making the geometric tiles even more three-dimensional than originally planned. The city of Venice is sinking. Every building, yes even San Marco, is built on a foundation of long logs pile-driven into the marshy soil. The best of these pilings was used for the exterior walls; inferior pilings were used for the floors. Hence, the undulating wave-like condition of the floor. But remember it is over 1000 years old! Notice the fine detail in the animals and geometric patterns displayed here in monochromatic tile work.

□ Look at the central dome.

Gaze upward and notice the theme here is not that of death, but of the Ascension of Christ into Heaven. Look around; even though the interior of the Basilica is somewhat dark and dank, there is a positive theme. Jesus is alive and rules from Heaven! Below is Mary, flanked by two angels, and the twelve Apostles.

The Venetians played a pivotal role in history. Sitting between the east and west, Venice absorbed big chunks of each unique culture. We’ve seen here in San Marco the blend of art and architecture from the two cultures, but Venice’s economy was also boosted by its relationship to Byzantium. In a.d.313 the Emperor Constantine moved the seat of the Roman Empire to Byzantium. Rome was left in ruins and

the new capital; Constantinople (modern day Istanbul) bathed in the glories of Rome while taking on Greek ideal and an oriental outlook.

The Venetians tapped into this new portion of the Empire by establishing trade routes to Constantinople and points farther east. During the Crusades (a series of military expeditions to “save” the holy city of Jerusalem from the Muslims) the city of Constantinople was threatened by the Turks. In 1204, Constantinople sent out an appeal to the west for help in defending the city against the invading Turks. The Pope sent armies to Constantinople, drove out the Turks, secured Constantinople, and then looted the city for themselves. Among the treasures shipped back to Venice are the bronze horses and many items in the Treasury.

In the far corner of the right apse is the Treasury containing many of these artifacts from the Crusades. Here you will find richly decorated items of silver and gold, ornate chalices, religious icons done in gold, silver, and precious gems, and other artifacts relating to worship and royalty (admission €2).

The Golden Alter Piece (Pala d’Oro) is also worth a closer look. You’ve no doubt noticed this under the stone canopy as you entered the Basilica. Beneath the alter lies the body of St. Mark. The altar was constructed by Byzantine craftsmen between a.d.976-1345. All this gold detail is a bit much. Try to take in one scene at a time and perhaps you will recognize a Bib-

lical scene or two. If you look closely you can see the tomb of St. Mark through the altar. The stone canopy deserves a closer look too. It portrays scenes from the New Testament in ornately carved detail (admission €1.50).

The Four Bronze Horses are upstairs and can be reached by taking the stairway in the Atrium marked Loggia dei Cavalli, Museo. There is a lot to see up here and the admission cost is money well spent. You'll get a close-up look at some of the ceiling mosaics, a great balcony view of the Basilica, an awesome view of the piazza and lagoon from the second story outdoor porch, which contains the replica horses, and finally, in a room by themselves, the real bronze horses.

These horses have literally galloped the globe. Originally cast in the 2nd century B.C. they were taken by Emperor Nero to Rome. Constantine took them with him to Constantinople, in a.d.313. Then during the Crusades, the Venetians stole them and brought them back to Venice along with their other loot from Constantinople. Napoleon took them to France when he conquered Venice in 1797. Here they stood atop the triumphal arch at the Louvre. Finally, they were returned to San Marco at the fall of Napoleon's empire (admission €5).

Finish looking around the Basilica. On your way out notice the main support pillars of the Basilica. See the "high water marks" ringing the pillars and adjacent walls? Remember, you

are on an island in the Adriatic Sea and flood tides engulf the piazza several times a year. Nearby notice the image of the Apostle St. Mark holding a gun.

The Doge's Palace (Palazzo Ducale)

This palace was a symbol of Venetian power and glory. It was initially built in the 12th century but completely transformed in the 14th–16th centuries. The palace was designed to be a multifunctional structure containing the residence of the Doge, the seat of the government, the courts of Law, and also a prison for criminals (April-October open daily 09:00-19:00; November to -March open 9:00-17:00. Last entry 30 minutes before closing. Telephone 041-522-4951).

The €20 ticket gets you in to see the Doge's Palace and a few other museums around Venice. They are: Museo Correr (described below), Pallazzo Mocenigo, Museo del Merletto di Burano (glass museum on Burano, closed Wednesday), Museo Del Vetro di Murano (lace Museum on Burano (closed Tuesday). The ticket is valid for three months. If the entry line is too long, consider purchasing your entry ticket across the piazza at the Museo Correr and then skip the ticket line at the palace.

Venice was a major world power for over 400 years (about 1150-1550). This palace was built to impress and overwhelm all who visited. Just

imagine you are a notable guest of the Doge arriving by boat in the 15th century. From the Grand Canal you see this beautiful palace. Would you be impressed and perhaps a little bit intimidated? The palace, coupled with the arsenal (we'll talk about it later), sent a clear message to all who visited Venice. "Don't mess with us, we've got what it takes to fight back."

David's Doge's Palace Tour

Notice the exterior of the palace. The ground floor has pointed arches typical of the Gothic style supported by rows of decorative columns. Originally, these columns sat on raised pedestals, but over the centuries the entire palace has sunk into the boggy soil so they are no longer visible. (You can see an example of the original columns in the entry and ticket area. These excavated columns are surrounded by plexiglass and give a view down to the original pedestals). The upper level of the palace has a lot more detailed and frilly latticework giving an eastern and Islamic flair. This style, known as flamboyant Gothic, was made famous by the Venetians and influenced by their ties to Byzantium. The geometrically designed pink and white marble façade lends to the overall beauty of the palace.

If you get a chance, (maybe a moonlight stroll later tonight) look at the three corners of the palace. They are beautifully decorated with carved niches depicting Biblical scenes. No-

tice especially the one at the corner nearest the lagoon and piazzetta. Here we see Adam and Eve with a most seductive serpent beckoning them to taste the forbidden fruit. (Throughout Europe you'll find recurring Biblical scenes such as Adam and Eve, The Creation, The Last Judgment, and so on. While traveling in Europe I find it interesting to compare the mood presented by the various artists who obviously include a bit of their own religious philosophy, or that of their patron, in their work).

□ The ticket booth and entrance to the palace is on the side nearest the lagoon.

Once inside, you'll enter the courtyard. Take a look around. To the right is the large façade of the palace with its lower stories in the Gothic style and its upper stories in the Renaissance style. Straight ahead is a clock façade done in the Baroque style. So again, just as outside in the piazza, we see three distinct time periods forever captured in stonework. Notice the Scala dei Gigante (The Stairway of the Giants). It has been given this name because of the enormous statues of Mars and Neptune standing guard at the top.

Walk over to the foot of the stairs. Turn around and you'll see the “real” entrance to the palace is behind you. It is called the Porta della Carta or “door of the papers” and is named for palace scribes who hung out here waiting their call to “record” official documents for the Republic, sort of like our modern-day court re-

porters. Again, this was built to impress and overwhelm visitors to Venice. The Doge would stand at the top of the stairs to greet guests and dignitaries allowing them to stand in awe taking in all the “grandness” of the palace and the obvious wealth of Venice.

The shaded porches that surround the palace, both outside, and here in the courtyard, are known as loggia. Not only did these loggia provide shade, but they also served as areas where one could look out on the grandeur of Venice.

One more thing before we go inside. Since its construction, there have been several events which have altered the palace’s grandeur and appearance. Two disastrous fires (May 1574 and December 1577) destroyed the rooms of the Collage, the Senate, and the upper floors of the building. This fire totally destroyed many of the original works of art. In 1797 the palace was the scene of a revolution in which crowds assaulted the palace destroying everything within reach. Finally, the French and Austrians, who ruled Venice for much of the 19th century, claimed many furnishings and artwork as their own.

Originally, in order to enter the palace one would enter by way of the “Door of the Papers,” climb up the “Stairway of the Giants,” walk across the second story loggia, and finally be faced with the impressive Scala d’ Oro (The

Golden Staircase). This Golden Staircase was yet another structure designed to further impress palace visitors. It was designed and constructed between 1557 and 1559 and contains a richly gilded ceiling of stucco and fresco.

The entire palace is loaded with artwork done by famous Venetians such as Titian, Tintoretto, Veronese, and Bellini. Royals throughout Europe were known to decorate the walls and ceilings of their palaces with artwork. But nowhere is it carried to such excess as here in the Doge's Palace. In fact, you'll soon find yourself overwhelmed and adopt a "gee, there are paintings in this room, too" attitude. Don't worry; I'll point you to the most significant works. You can think of everything else as lavishly decorated wallpaper for the palace.

□ Climb the richly decorated "Golden Staircase" to the second floor.

*Note: The second floor deserves a quick walk through, but the good stuff is upstairs on the third floor. On the second floor you'll find public rooms, some private chambers, and gathering rooms.

When you're finished on the second floor, return to the Golden staircase and climb up to the decadence on the third floor.

After ascending the Golden Staircase you'll come to a small room known as the Atrio Quadrato. The richly decorated room served as

sort of a holding room for visitors.

□ Enter the next room.

In this room, known as the Room of the Four Doors, palace visitors were greeted by staff members and sent in the direction of their business. Venice was a democratic society with three governmental branches: the executive, legislative, and judicial. Each of the three remaining doors led to one of these governmental branches.

The room was designed by Palladio. He also built the impressive church of San Giorgio Maggiore located just across the Grand Canal from St. Mark's Square. Notice the intricate and ornate stuccowork on the ceiling and over the doors. Artists of the Baroque era were famous for adding ornamentation to the excess.

□ Enter the next room with the big fireplace.

Here in the Antecollegio noble and commoners alike waited their turn to see the Doges. Hanging below the ornately decorative ceiling are two notable paintings. The first, on the wall opposite the window, is known as The Rape of Europa and was painted by Veronese around 1580. The Renaissance brought a renewed interest in ancient Roman and Greek subjects. Here Veronese depicts the mythological story of Zeus and Europa. It is said Zeus spied Europa picking flowers near the sea one day and fell madly in love. He appeared to her as a bull and carried her off into the sea to the island of

Crete. There, she bore him three sons, Minos, Rhadamanthus, and Sarpedon, each of whom became kings.

Look over at the painting by the window. This is by Tintoretto and titled Bacchus and Ariadne. This 1576 oil painting is yet another mythological story put to canvas.

Here Bacchus, the god of wine, offers the mortal Ariadne a crown of stars. These paintings were “big stuff” back in Renaissance period. Notice the color, nudity, depth, and perspective in these paintings. For a civilization that had been trapped in the backwardness of the Middle Ages for a thousand years, this new art form was truly something to be proud of and to show off.

□ Enter the next room.

The Collegio - In this room the Doge, sitting on the platform at the far end, would receive guests and preside over official ceremonies. On other occasions the Doge and his cabinet of advisors would meet here in private to discuss matters concerning the State.

The gold embossed clock on the wall is in the twenty-four hour format and designed to run counter-clockwise (I’ll tell you why in a minute). Notice that a sword is used for the clock hand. The ceiling (guess which era, yep, Baroque) is done in 24-carat gold with Renaissance paintings by Veronese hung from the

ceiling. These are actual oil on canvas paintings hung flat on the ceiling and then the ornate gold décor was designed around them. (Hanging paintings on the ceiling was not a common practice. Usually if one wanted artwork on the ceiling it would be done in the medium of fresco, paint applied directly to wet plaster, as in the Sistine Chapel. But here in Venice the climate was too damp for the fresco technique to be practical).

□ Enter the next large room.

The Senate Chamber- This was where the legislative branch of the Venetian government convened. Sixty senators and the Doge met here to discuss issues and pass laws. The senators spoke from the podium over between the windows.

The paintings here on the walls and ceiling form a cycle depicting the divine favor cast toward the Republic of Venice. Tintoretto's Triumph of Venice commands center stage on the ceiling. Here you see Lady Venice up in heaven with all the gods. Lesser beings swirling around bring up gifts. Hummm...do you suppose that is really how the Venetians saw themselves?

Notice the clocks on the wall. One of them backs up to and shares the same mechanism as the clock in the Collegio. This one runs clockwise, the one in the Collegio runs counter-clockwise.

Now is a good time to talk a bit about the paintings the various Doges had commissioned for themselves. In the previous rooms and the exterior facades, you've no doubt noticed the humble images of a kneeling Doge. Of course this was far from the truth. The ruling Doge had great power and was humble to no one. But they did not see it this way. Their image of themselves was that of a humble servant, hence the numerous images of kneeling Doges in Venice. But look here above the entry door and you will find one of the few images of a Doge standing, not kneeling! (Look at the flanking panel for a comparison with a kneeling Doge).

□ Now you'll pass again through the Room of the Four Doors. Turn the corner and go into a large room with a semi-circular platform at one end.

The Room of the Council of Ten was the seat of the judicial branch of the government. Venice had a worldwide reputation for swift and harsh justice dished out by a dreaded group known as the Council of Ten. This group included the Doge and other prominent elected officials. Their duty was to investigate crimes of a political nature against the security of the State.

Over time, The Council of Ten stepped way beyond its bounds and became an entity of its own. In its heyday, they had their own budget,

were accountable to no one, and had a slew of police and CIA-type investigators. Eventually, the dreaded Council of Ten became the un-official ruling body of the State. If one was so much as suspected of causing trouble, they could be swept off the street, tried in secret, and sentenced to life in prison, without due process or a fair trial. On the right, notice the small door leading off the platform. This leads through secret passages to the prisons and torture chambers.

The large central oval painting is a 19th-century copy of Veronese's Jupiter Attacks the Vices. How appropriate for this chamber of horrors! The original painting, stolen by Napoleon, hangs today in Paris' Louvre museum.

□ Pass through the next room. As you exit notice the "Lion's Mouth" carved on both sides of the exit doors. These are scattered throughout the palace and are here for anyone to voice a complaint or suspicion about another. All you had to do was scribble a note on a scrap of paper and drop it in the "Lion's Mouth." This got the Council of Ten in motion to do a little investigative work. The Armory Museum is up the stairs on the 4th floor.

The Armory Museum displays all sorts of stuff with which to fight, torture, and kill. Once you've looked at the displays, turn around and glance out the window. In the lagoon you'll see San Giorgio Maggiore, the church built by this

palace's major architect. Off in the distance you can see Venice's beach on the Adriatic Sea. Known as the Lido di Venezia, it is a typical beach with expensive hotels lining its shores. The small village atmosphere along the streets lining the lagoon make this a perfect place to escape the tourist crowds of Venice.

□ Go down the stairs, turn left, pass through a long hall with wooden beams and seats built into the walls. At the end of the hall turn right. The Hall of the Grand Council-Two-thirds the length of a football field and about as wide, this room could accommodate over two thousand people at one time. It was designed for the nobles of Venice. In theory, these nobles ran the Republic. The Doge, senators, and even the Council of Ten were elected from this group known as the Grand Council. The Doge was elected here and then presented to all of Venice's citizens from the balcony at the far end of the room overlooking the Piazzetta.

Surrounding the room are portraits, in chronological order, of the seventy-six Doges. The one at the far end is Doge Falier. His image is blackened-out because he opposed the will of the Grand Council. He was tried for treason and beheaded.

Above the Doges throne hangs the largest oil painting in the world. Tintoretto's masterpiece titled Vision of Paradise contains 1700 square feet of canvas. Christ and Mary are at the top

of heaven surrounded by hundreds of saints. There is too much to see here, just concentrate on one area, and then move on.

The rest of the room shows great scenes from the building of the Republic. By the time the palace was completed, Venice was actually basking in the glories of the past. At the turn of the 16th century, Venice's prominence was on the decline. Its trade routes to the east were compromised by Portugal's great age of discovery. Fighting and war depleted Venice's manpower and arsenal. Eventually the rest of Europe and the Turks outranked Venice and further gobbled their holdings.

□ Exit the Grand Hall and follow the route through some of the once "secret passages." You'll cross the covered Bridge of Sighs and enter into the "new" prisons.

The Prisons: This is where people ended up when they got on the wrong side of the Council of Ten. The most notorious cells were known as "the wells." Located in the basement, they were wet, damp, full of mold and mildew, and cramped. By the 16th century "the wells" were overcrowded with political prisoners. New prisons were built across the canal and connected to the Doge's Palace by a covered bridge so as to conceal the identity of prisoners.

You can choose the short or long tour route for the prisons. Since you've gone this far I'd take

the long route for a grand tour of the dungeons. Life was not fun in here!

The Bridge of Sighs: As the name suggests, this was the last look at romantic Venice a condemned prisoner would get before going into the new prison across the canal. This ends the tour of the Doge's Palace. Exit the prison, cross the Bridge of Sighs, gaze out the latticed window and sigh! Follow the signs back to the courtyard and out the Portal Della Carte to the Piazzetta.

This ends your tour of the Doge's Palace. Take a break, enjoy the square!

Museo Civico Correr

As mentioned earlier, this museum is included with your admission ticket for the Doge's Palace. The museum is dedicated to preserving and documenting the history of the city of Venice. There is a cafeteria and great views out over St. Mark's Square (see "buying tickets for the Doge's Palace" above. Open daily April-October 09:00-19:00, November-March 09:00-17:00, last entry 1 hour before closing time. Telephone 041 522 4951).

Campanile

This bell tower is just over a hundred years old. It was built to replace the original 1000-year-old tower/lighthouse that toppled to the ground one morning in 1902. Today you can ride an elevator to the top for a grand view of Venice,

the lagoon, outer islands, and the sea. The bells ring every hour, so plan your time accordingly. (€10, daily 09:00-19:00).

Galleria dell' Accademia

Located at the foot of the Accademia Bridge, this gallery sports the World's best collection of Venetian Renaissance Art. You will find works here by: Veronese, Bellini, Giorgione, and others. Don't try to pack this and the Doge's palace into one day unless you are a hardcore art fanatic. Sometimes there can be long lines as they only allow 300 people in at one time (€12, Monday 08:15-14:00, Tuesday-Sunday 08:15-19:15, audioguides are available in English for €6; no photos, telephone 041 522 2247).

Santa Maria Glorioso dei Frari

This church, located in the San Paolo neighborhood, is the most important architectural structure in the Venetian Gothic style other than St. Mark's Basilica. It was built between 1340 and 1443 for the Order of the Friars of St. Frances. It contains tombs of notable members of the Republic's nobility and lots of artistic masterpieces. The masterpieces are presented here, not hanging on a wall as in a museum, but in the exact location for which the artist intended. In Italian this is known as *in situ*. In English it means "on location." There are many places in Europe to experience *in situ* art, but none better than here in Venice.

Just to the right of the high altar you'll find the

Chapel of St. John the Baptist. Located here is Donatello's woodcarving of St. John. This work, dated and signed by Donatello in 1438, shows a haggard St. John after forty days of solitude in the desert.

Donatello was a native of Florence and a key artist in the transitional time between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Notice how the woodcarving still has the medieval elongation and flatness found in altar screens of the Middle Ages. But there is a rebirth beginning here. St. John is a real person. His emotion can be seen and felt in Donatello's chisel marks.

Bellini's Madonna and the Saints is located in the chapel farther to the right. Bellini was a Venetian artist. He painted many Madonnas in his lifetime. Most had the unifying characteristic of placing the subjects in a most beautiful physical setting. Also notice that Bellini has painted Mary in an un-lady-like position with her legs spread wide apart. Before leaving here, turn around and look at the wall behind you. Do you see the fresco depicting a tapestry on the wall to the far left? Notice the lady peeking out from behind the tapestry. What do you think? Hired by the chapel attendants to help enforce the no photography policy.

Now turn your attention to the red and gold painting hanging over the altar. Titian worked on this huge altarpiece (The Assumption) for more than two years from 1516 to 1518. It has

to be seen as a milestone in Titian's career establishing him as a more universal artist who drew inspiration from outside the confines of Venice.

The powerful figures of the Apostles reflect the influence of Michelangelo and some parts of the painting are similar to the icons used in the works of Raphael. Some art historians believe Titian was striving to get away from the typical Venetian Renaissance style and develop an artistic style of his own.

The picture is composed of three orders. At the bottom are the Apostles (humanity), amazed and stunned by the wondrous happening. St Peter is kneeling with his hand on his breast, St Thomas is pointing at the Virgin, and St Andrew in a red cloak is stretching forward. In the middle, the Madonna, slight and bathed in light, is surrounded by a host of angels. Above is God, the Father, calling the Virgin to him. The painting is signed as Ticianus down low in the middle of the picture.

Scattered about the church are the tombs of Canova (the one shaped like a pyramid) and Titian (done up in grand style). Behind Titian's tomb there is a carved marble copy of his masterpiece, the Assumption.

Finally walk over to the left and take a look at the huge tomb with an exit door beneath. Take a close look at the black men clothed in

solid white and holding up the second level. Concentrate for a moment on their intricately carved eyes and facial expressions. This sculptor is good! You can almost feel the men's agony and hatred as they are forever forced to bear the load of the Doge's Monument above. This monument was completed in 1669 and is an excellent example of the ornamental style of the Baroque era.

Cost, Hours, and Location: €3, Monday-Saturday 9:00 to 18:00, Sunday 13:00-18:00, dress appropriately, telephone 041 522 2637. The church is located in the San Paolo neighborhood. Get a map and wander from the Rialto bridge back into the neighborhood for a few hundred meters.

The Jewish Ghetto

Not on the beaten tourist path, but yet an interesting excursion for a unique look at the people and culture of Venice. The word ghetto is actually a word in the Venetian dialect meaning "foundry" in English. This area of Venice was known as the foundry district, in Venetian "ghetto", and is the sight of a former copper foundry.

Through the centuries the term ghetto has acquired many meanings. But in this, the original ghetto, the term was nothing more than a description of the area of town in which the Jewish community resided. Jews settled here in 1516 and were "confined" to the foundry area.

There were a lot of people here. Notice the seven and eight story buildings around Campo del Ghetto. There were so many people here that building construction had no way to go but up. Some believe these tall buildings were Europe's first skyscrapers, built not for posterity, but for purpose.

There is a Jewish Museum, located on Campo Ghetto Nuovo, that presents an excellent history of this original Jewish ghetto (Guided tour only leaving hourly. €3, June-September=Sunday-Friday 10:00-19:00, October-May= Sunday-Friday 10:00-17:30, closed Saturday, telephone 041 715 359).

Arsenale

During the Crusades the Venetian's needed a construction site for the large number of ships needed to maintain a naval presence in the east. This Arsenale dates from the 12th century and is enclosed by a medieval wall with watchtowers. The Arsenale has two entrances: the land gateway topped with stone lions taken from ancient Greece, and the water gateway marked by another set of massive towers. Although you cannot go into the actual Arsenale, it is possible to walk around the perimeter walls.

Rialto Bridge

The Rialto Bridge is almost as famous to visitors as San Marco. Its builder was Antonio Ponte. Antonio won a competition to design and build the bridge, beating out such

notable artists as Michelangelo and Palladio. The bridge was completed in just three years time opening to foot traffic in 1591. It is constructed on a foundation consisting of some 12,000 wooden pilings driven into the ground. The bridge has three walkways all of which are lined with shops and souvenirs. It is very crowded during the day when the tourists are in town shopping. You'll find it is deserted in the early morning and late evening.

Surrounding Islands

Murano

Murano owes its fame and prosperity to its glassmaking industry, which was relocated to the island in 1291 for fear of fires and the abundance of smoke. In the 15th and 16th centuries, it was the premier glass producing center across Europe. Glass artisans were revered but suffered severe punishments if they tried to relocate their businesses.

Many factories offer tours and glass-blowing demonstrations but are closed on the weekend.

Museo del Vetro

This glass museum houses a number of antique pieces. Palazzo Giustinian, open daily 10 AM to 6 PM (November to March to 5 PM)

How to get to Murano: 4, 4.1, 4.2 or 12 from Fondamenta Nuove. 3 from Piazzale Roma

Burano

Where Murano is famous for its glass, Burano is famous for its lace. Like the glass, Burano's lace was the most sought after in Europe in the 16th century. The main road, Via Baldassare Galuppi, is lined with traditional lace and linen stalls. At the Museo del Merletto, you can watch authentic lace being made and see samples of antique lace.

Museo del Merletto

Open: Tuesday to Sunday 10 AM to 6 PM (November to March to 5 PM)

How to get to Burano: 4 12 from Fondamenta Nuove. 14 from San Zaccaria via Lido and Punta Sabbioni

Torcello

The colony on Torcello was established between the fifth and sixth centuries and once supported 20,000 inhabitants. However, the rise of Venice pushed it into decline, and its population today is about 60.

The Byzantine cathedral, Santa Maria Assunta, was built in 639 but underwent massive renovations in 1008. It retains its Romanesque form and has a ninth century portico and a campanile offering stellar views. Inside, the entire West wall is covered with doomsday mosaics dating from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Next to the cathedral sits the Santa Fosca church. It is only open from mass. The nearby Museo dell'Estuario houses archaeological finds from

the island and religious artifacts.

Santa Maria Assunta. Open daily, 10:30 AM to 4:30 PM (March to October: 10:30 AM to 5:30 PM)

Museo dell'Estuario. Open Tuesday to Sunday, 10:30 AM to 5 PM (March to October: 10:30 AM to 5:30 PM)

How to get there: 4 12 from Fondamenta Nuove, then 9 from Burano

Brief History of Venice

Venice is a tourist attraction in itself. Even if there were no museums, no churches, and no entertainment, the lagoon-locked city would attract tourists just for its character. Founded more than thirteen hundred years ago, the collection of boggy islands became a refuge for local tribes fleeing the invading Franks. Protected by marshlands and several kilometers of water, it provided safety and peace of mind to those who inhabited the area.

Settlers eventually began driving piling into the bog to provide support for buildings. The marshland was transformed from a swamp to an island built of pilings and wood, canals served as the streets, and boats served as carriages. In A.D. 811 a Doge (from the Latin dux meaning leader) was elected and Venice was on its way to becoming a world power. In 828, the relics of Saint Mark were brought from Alexandria and he became the town's patron saint.

Several councils, designed to limit the Doge's power, supervised the role of the Doge. The Grand Council developed the laws; the Senate was responsible for foreign affairs, the economy, and the military; and the Council of Ten was responsible for security. The Council of Ten maintained a network of secret police and informants, which, by design, created an air of mistrust but ensured control of the city.

The Middle Ages saw Venice rise to become a world power. Being strategically located on an important trade route between the Middle East and Europe, Venice seized the opportunity to regulate trade and shipping routes. In effect, the Venetians became the "middlemen" between the economies of the East and West. Cargo of precious spices, silk, and jewels all passed through Venice and merchants became very rich.

By 1450 Venice was at its zenith, being both a political and religious power in Italy. Venice maintained its independence from the Pope, the Holy Roman Empire, and kingdoms to the north by maintaining a powerful army and navy, as well as forming alliances with neighboring kingdoms. The late 15th century saw the discovery of the Americas and new trade routes. Consequently, a decrease in trade through Venice led to a slow decline of the Republic. Finally, in 1797, Napoleon Bonaparte entered and abolished Venice's constitution and dissolved the Republic. Later Napoleon ced-

ed the city to Austria. It was not until 1866 that Venice and the Veneto were united with Italy. Since the early 1800's Venice's population has dwindled. Once commanding the attention of worldwide trade, now Venice delights in being an enchanting destination and on the must-see list of tourists worldwide. Today it's the home to about 58,000 people living in the old city center.

Recent decades have seen the young people leave for a bigger and more active life in the cities of Italy. Many have forsaken their traditional family ties, leaving an older generation to live out their lives in Venice. Just a few blocks off the San Marco and Rialto tourist route visitors can find local neighborhoods filled with laundry flapping in the breeze, women chatting from their windows high above the alleys, and gentlemen visiting at the local square. Most visitors to Venice miss this intimate look into the city's culture. Don't let it pass you by, get out and explore!

Shopping

Rialto Market

The fruit and vegetable market has been in existence for hundreds of years, its stalls lining the Grand Canal in San Polo. Fishermen also sell the day's catch in the market next door. The markets open at dawn, and the vendors begin to pack up by noon so make sure you visit early. Around lunchtime, the fishermen cook

what hasn't been sold, offering delicious fresh fish meals for a few euros.

From the Rialto Bridge, cross to the west side and follow the river north (to the right). From the Rialto Mercato vaporetto stop, follow the Canal to the right.

Entertainment and Outdoor Activities

Festivals

Carnevale—February/March

Since 1268, Venetians (and now flocks of tourists) don Venetian masks and costumes in the week leading up to Ash Wednesday.

Saint Mark's Day—April 25

St. Mark is the city's patron saint. The day is celebrated with a procession to the Basilica. Traditionally, men give a red rosebud to the women they love.

The Vogalonga—May

this event was created around 1990 to raise awareness of the swell created by engine powered boats. Teams in rowboats run a 30 km course, beginning in St. Mark's Basin, by the Doge's Palace.

Ascension Day—May

ascension Sunday celebrates the marriage to the sea, recalling the victorious undertaking of the Venetian fleet in 998 to liberate Dalmatia. From that year forward, the Does would board

a boat called the Bucintoro and throw a ring into the water to symbolize the city's dominion over the sea. Today, the Mayor and other civil authorities board the Bucintoro and lead a procession of historical boats to the Church of San Nicolò on the Lido where the ring is still thrown into the water. There are also rowing races, classical music concerts, period costume parades, theatre performances and the Sensa Fair.

Regata Storica—September

Venice holds its biggest event on the first Sunday of September. There is a procession on the Grand Canal, including many people in costume. Following the procession, there are four rowing races.

The Redentore Feast—July

this festival falls on the third Saturday in July. Originally established in 1576 to celebrate the end of a terrible epidemic, boats gather in St. Mark's Basin to watch fireworks at midnight and then head to the Lido to await sunrise.

Opera

The Gran Teatro La Fenice is one of Italy's most important opera houses. It was fully restored after a fire in 1996. The upper season runs from May to November. Tickets begin at €20. Campo San Fantin, San Marco 1977

www.teatrolafenice.it

Events

Tickets to most events can be purchased from Venezia Unica. [veneziaunica.it](https://www.veneziaunica.it)



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