



**nileGUIDE**

ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



stevebrownd50

# The Best of Venice in Two Days

## Venice, 2 Days

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# Guide Description



**AUTHOR NOTE:** Now it's time to explore the quarters across the Grand Canal from San Marco. This is not a quiet neighborhood amble: Some of Venice's greatest masterpieces are here, and you'll discover one remarkable church and treasure-filled museum after another.

# Itinerary Overview

things to do  
restaurants  
hotels  
nightlife

## Day 1 - Venice

**DAY NOTE:** Piazza San Marco: The heart of the city for more than 1,000 years combines the very old (the basilica) with the relatively new (the 16th- and 17th-c. Procuratie Vecchie and Procuratie Nuove on the north and south sides of the square), yet still manages to be harmonious.

**Caffè Florian:** You'll pay dearly for your cappuccino on the terrace, but you'll never sip coffee in more atmospheric surroundings on Piazza San Marco.

**San Salvador:** The handsome white interior provides refuge from the busy Mercerie, one of Venice's main shopping streets, as well as the chance to view some excellent paintings: Two Titians, a Transfiguration and an Annunciation, and Carpaccio's Disciples at Emmaus.

**Grand Canal trip:** A cruise up one of the world's most beautiful waterways is the ideal way to end a long day of touring. Get off at the Ferrovia stop for the return trip.



**Canal Grande (Grand Canal)**



**Basilica di San Marco (St. Mark's Basilica)**



**Chiesa di San Salvador**



**Campanile di San Marco (Bell Tower)**

## Day 2 - Venice

**DAY NOTE:** Santa Maria della Salute: Saint Mary of Health was begun in 1630, an offering of thanks to the Virgin Mary for bringing an end to a plague outbreak that killed a third of the city's population. The massive white-marble church by architect Baldassare Longhena commands the entrance to the Grand Canal, and its high domes mimic those of San Marco across the water and suggest the Madonna's crown. A suitably impressive collection of paintings hang in the round, marble interior, including Tintoretto's Wedding at Cana and Titian's St. Mark Enthroned with Saints. The Virgin is honored on the high altar with a Byzantine icon and a wonderfully dramatic marble sculptural group by Giusto Le Corte—an old hag representing the plague flees from a torch-bearing angel as the Virgin and a noblewoman, in the role of Venice, look on.

**La Dogana da Mar:** The 17th-century Customs house at the tip of the Dorsoduro resembles the hull of a ship and was once a mandatory stop for all ships entering Venice. On the roof, a statue of Fortune stands over a gold globe, and looking out to sea from the landing stage it's easy to imagine the time when Venetians felt they were indeed the lucky rulers of the waves.

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**Gallerie dell'Accademia:** A walk through the galleries can take a good part of a day and is a lesson in Venetian art, from Carpaccio to Tiepolo. If time is tight or the temptation to be outdoors exploring the city too great, at least see Room 10, where works by Titian, Tintoretto, and Veronese line the walls, and Room 21, for a look at Carpaccio's colorful action-filled Story of Saint Ursula cycle.

**Scuola Grande di San Rocco:** San Rocco, the patron saint of the sick and a Venetian favorite, was especially popular for his alleged prowess at curing the plague. The scuola was begun in the early 16th century to house the saint's relics.

**Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari:** One of the largest churches in Venice is also one of the city's great treasure troves of art, with masterworks by Titian and Giovanni Bellini.



**Collezione Peggy Guggenheim (Peggy Guggenheim Collection)**



**Dogana da Mar**



**Santa Maria della Salute (Church of the Virgin Mary of Good Health)**



**Galleria dell'Accademia (Academy Gallery)**

# Itinerary Overview

things to do  
restaurants  
hotels  
nightlife



**Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari (Church of the Frari)**



**Scuola Grande di San Rocco (Confraternity of St. Roch)**

# Day 1 - Venice



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**location:**  
Venice

## Canal Grande (Grand Canal)

**DESCRIPTION:** A leisurely cruise along the "Canalazzo" from Piazza San Marco to the Ferrovia (train station), or the reverse, is one of Venice's (and life's) must-do experiences. Hop on the no. 1 vaporetto in the late afternoon (try to get one of the coveted outdoor seats in the prow), when the weather-worn colors of the former homes of Venice's merchant elite are warmed by the soft light and reflected in the canal's rippling waters, and the busy traffic of delivery boats, vaporetti, and gondolas that fills the city's main thoroughfare has eased somewhat. The sheer number and opulence of the 200-odd palazzi, churches, and imposing republican buildings dating from the 14th to the 18th centuries is enough to make any

Photo courtesy of wikimedia

boat-going visitor's head swim. Many of the largest canal-side buildings are now converted into imposing international banks, government or university buildings, art galleries, and dignified consulates. © Frommer's

**contact:**  
tel: 041-522-5697

**location:**  
Venice

**hours:**  
Basilica, Tesoro, and Pala  
d'Oro: summer Mon-Sat  
9:45am-5pm; Sun 2-5pm (in  
winter usually closes an hour  
earlier). Museo Marciano:  
summer daily 9:45am-5pm (in  
winter usually closes an hour  
earlier)

## 1 Basilica di San Marco (St. Mark's Basilica)

**DESCRIPTION:** Venice for centuries was Europe's principal gateway between the Orient and the West, so it should come as no surprise that the architectural style for the sumptuously Byzantine Basilica di San Marco, replete with five mosquelike bulbed domes, was borrowed from Constantinople. Legend has it that in 828, two enterprising Venetian merchants smuggled the remains of St. Mark the Evangelist from Egypt by packing them in pickled pork to bypass the scrutiny of Muslim guards. Thus, St. Mark replaced the Greek St. Theodore as Venice's patron saint, and a small chapel was built on this spot in his honor. Through the centuries (much of what you see was constructed in the 11th c.), wealthy Venetian merchants and politicians alike vied with one another in donating gifts to expand and embellish this church, the saint's final resting place and, with the adjacent Palazzo Ducale, a symbol of Venetian wealth and power. Exotic and mysterious, it is unlike any other Roman Catholic church. And so it is that the Basilica di San Marco earned its name as the Chiesa d'Oro (Golden Church), with a cavernous interior exquisitely gilded with Byzantine mosaics added over some 7 centuries and covering every inch of both ceiling and pavement. For a closer look at many of the most remarkable ceiling mosaics and a better view of the Oriental carpetlike patterns of the pavement mosaics, pay the admission to go upstairs to the **Galleria** (the entrance to this and the Museo Marciano is in the atrium at the principal entrance); this was originally the women's gallery or matroneum. It is also the only way to access the outside Loggia dei Cavalli. More important, here you can mingle with the celebrated **Triumphal Quadriga** of four gilded bronze horses (dating from the 2nd or 3rd c. A.D.), brought to Venice from Constantinople (although probably cast in Imperial Rome) in 1204 together with the Lion of St. Mark (the patron saint's and the former republic's mascot) and other booty from the Crusades; they were symbols of the unrivaled Serene Republic and are the only quadriga to have survived from the classical era. The restored originals have been moved inside to the small museum. A visit to the outdoor **Loggia dei Cavalli** is an unexpected highlight, providing an excellent view of the piazza and what Napoleon called "the most beautiful salon in the world" upon his arrival in Venice in 1797 (he would later cart the quadriga off to Paris, but they were returned after the fall of the French Empire). The 500-year-old **Torre dell'Orologio (Clock Tower)** stands to your right; to your left is the **Campanile (Bell Tower)**, and beyond, the glistening waters of the open lagoon and Palladio's **Chiesa di San Giorgio** on its own island. It is a photographer's dream. The church's greatest treasure is the magnificent altarpiece known as the **Pala d'Oro (Golden Altarpiece)**, a Gothic masterpiece encrusted with close to 2,000 precious gems and 255 enameled panels. It

Photo courtesy of Basilica di San Marco.

was created as early as the 10th century and embellished by master Venetian and Byzantine artisans between the 12th and 14th centuries. It is located behind the main altar, whose green marble canopy on alabaster columns covers the tomb of St. Mark. Also worth a visit is the **Tesoro (Treasury)**, with a collection of the Crusaders' plunder from Constantinople and other icons and relics amassed by the church over the years. Much of the Venetian booty has been incorporated into the interior and exterior of the basilica in the form of marble, columns, capitals, and statuary. Second to the Pala d'Oro in importance is the 10th-century **Madonna di Nicopeia**, a bejeweled icon taken from Constantinople and exhibited in its own chapel to the left of the main altar. She is held as one of present-day Venice's most protective patrons. **Free Tours** -- In July and August (with much less certainty the rest of the year), church-affiliated volunteers give free tours Monday to Saturday, leaving four or five times daily (not all tours are in English), beginning at 10:30am; groups gather in the atrium, where you'll find posters with schedules. **Know Before You Go . . .** -- The guards at the cathedral's entrance are serious about forbidding entry to anyone in inappropriate attire -- shorts, sleeveless shirts (and shirts too short to hide your bellybutton), and skirts above the knee. Although the basilica is open Sunday morning for anyone wishing to attend Mass, you cannot enter merely to gawk as a tourist. © Frommer's

**contact:**  
tel: 041-523-6717

**location:**  
Venice

**hours:**  
Daily 9am-noon and 3-6pm

## Chiesa di San Salvador

**DESCRIPTION:** The interior is classic Renaissance, built by Giorgio Spavento, Tullio Lombardo, and Sansovino between 1508 and 1534; the facade is 1663 baroque. It includes a pair of sculptures (Charity and Hope) by an elderly Jacopo Sansovino, who may also have designed the third altar, which supports one of the church's treasures, Titian's Annunciation (1556). Titian also painted the Transfiguration (1560) on the high altar. Ask the sacristan to lower the painting so that you can see the ornate 14th-century silver reredos (ornamental partition) hidden behind. In the right transept rests Bernardino Contino's tomb for Caterina Cornaro (d. 1510), the one-time queen of Cyprus who abdicated her throne to Venice and ended up with Asolo as a consolation prize. © Frommer's

Photo courtesy of Chiesa di San Salvador

**contact:**  
tel: 041-522-4064

**location:**  
Venice

**hours:**  
Apr-June 9:30am-5pm; July-Sept 9am-9pm

## 2 Campanile di San Marco (Bell Tower)

**DESCRIPTION:** It's an easy elevator ride up to the top of this 97m (318-ft.) bell tower for a breathtaking view of the cupolas of St. Mark's. It is the highest structure in the city, offering a pigeon's-eye view that includes the lagoon, its neighboring islands, and the red rooftops and church domes and bell towers of Venice -- and, oddly, not a single canal. On a clear day, you may even see the outline of the distant snowcapped Dolomite Mountains. Originally built in the 9th century, the bell tower was then rebuilt in the 12th, 14th, and 16th centuries, when the pretty marble loggia at its base was added by Jacopo Sansovino. It collapsed unexpectedly in 1902, miraculously hurting no one except a cat. It was rebuilt exactly as before, using most of the same materials, even rescuing one of the five historical bells that it still uses today (each bell was rung for a different

Photo courtesy of Campanile di San Marco (Bell Tower)

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purpose, such as war, the death of a doge, religious holidays, and so on).  
© Frommer's

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# Day 2 - Venice



## QUICK NOTE

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**Peggy Guggenheim Collection:** The American heiress spent much of her life collecting contemporary art, living up to her pledge to "buy a picture a day." In 1949 she found a home for herself and her paintings, the Palazzo Venier dei Leoni, that is as surreal as some of the paintings she preferred. Only the ground floor of the 18th-century palace was completed, providing distinctive surroundings for a collection that includes Giorgio De Chirico's *The Red Tower*, Rene Magritte's *Empire of Light*, and works by Jackson Pollock (whom Guggenheim discovered), Max Ernst (whom she married), and many others. The shady garden is filled with sculpture as well as the graves of Guggenheim and her dogs. The waterside terrace provides sweeping views up and down the Grand Canal.

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Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari: One of the largest churches in Venice is also one of the city's great treasure troves of art, with masterworks by Titian and Giovanni Bellini.

**contact:**  
tel: 041-240-5411  
www.guggenheim-venice.it

**location:**  
Dorsoduro 701  
Venice

**hours:**  
Wed-Mon 10am-6pm (until  
10pm on Sat Apr-Oct)

## 1 Collezione Peggy Guggenheim (Peggy Guggenheim Collection)

**DESCRIPTION:** Considered to be one of the most comprehensive and important collections of modern art in the world, and one of the most visited attractions in Venice, this collection of painting and sculpture was assembled by the eccentric and eclectic American expatriate Peggy Guggenheim. She did an excellent job of it, with particular strengths in cubism, European abstraction, surrealism, and abstract expressionism since about 1910. Max Ernst was one of her early favorites (she even married him), as was Jackson Pollock. Among the major works here are Magritte's *Empire of Light*, Picasso's *La Baignade*, Kandinsky's *Landscape with Church (with Red Spot)*, and Pollock's *Alchemy*. The museum is also home to several haunting canvases by Ernst, Giacometti's unique figures, Brancusi's fluid sculptures, and numerous works by Braque, Dalí, Léger, Mondrian, Chagall, and Miró. Directly on the Grand Canal, the elegant 18th-century Palazzo Venier dei Leoni was purchased by Peggy Guggenheim in 1949 and was her home in Venice until her death in 1979. The graves of her canine companions share the lovely interior garden with several prominent works of the Nasher Sculpture Garden, while the canal-side patio watched over by Marino Marini's *Angel of the Citadel* is one of the best spots to simply linger and watch the canal life. A new and interesting book and gift shop and cafe/bistro has opened in a separate wing across the inside courtyard where temporary exhibits are often housed. Check the tourist office for an update on museum hours; it is often open when many others are closed and sometimes offers a few hours a week of free admission. Don't be shy about speaking English with the young staff working here on internship; most of them are American. They offer free tours in English of the permanent collection on Saturdays at 7pm. © Frommer's

Photo courtesy of Collezione Peggy Guggenheim (Peggy Guggenheim Collection)

**location:**  
Venice

## Dogana da Mar

**DESCRIPTION:** The eastern tip of Dorsoduro is covered by the triangular 15th-century (restructured with a new facade in 1676-82) customs house that once controlled all boats entering the Grand Canal. It's topped by a statue of Fortune holding aloft a golden ball. Now it makes for remarkable, sweeping views across the bacino San Marco, from the last leg of the Grand Canal past Piazzetta San Marco and the Ducal Palace, over the nearby isle of San Giorgio Maggiore, La Giudecca, and out into the lagoon itself. © Frommer's

Photo courtesy of Dogana da Mar

**contact:**  
tel: 041-522-5558

**location:**  
Venice

**hours:**  
Daily 9am-noon and  
3-5:30pm

## 2 Santa Maria della Salute (Church of the Virgin Mary of Good Health)

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**DESCRIPTION:** Generally referred to as "La Salute," this crown jewel of 17th-century baroque architecture proudly reigns at a commercially and aesthetically important point, almost directly across from the Piazza San Marco, where the Grand Canal empties into the lagoon. The first stone was laid in 1631 after the Senate decided to honor the Virgin Mary of Good Health for delivering Venice from a plague. They accepted the revolutionary plans of a young, relatively unknown architect, Baldassare Longhena (who would go on to design, among other projects, the Ca' Rezzonico). He dedicated the next 50 years of his life to overseeing its progress (he would die 1 year after its inauguration but 5 years before its completion). The only great baroque monument built in Italy outside Rome, the octagonal Salute is recognized for its exuberant exterior of volutes, scrolls, and more than 125 statues and rather sober interior, though one highlighted by a small gallery of important works in the sacristy. (You have to pay to enter the sacristy; the entrance is through a small door to the left of the main altar.) A number of ceiling paintings and portraits of the Evangelists and church doctors are all by Titian. On the right wall is Tintoretto's Marriage at Cana, often considered one of his best. © Frommer's

**contact:**  
tel: 041-522-2247  
www.gallerieaccademia.org

**location:**  
Venice

**hours:**  
Mon 8:15am-2pm; Tues-  
Sun 8:15am-7:15pm; last  
admission 45 min. before  
closing (winter hours may be  
shorter)

## 3 Galleria dell'Accademia (Academy Gallery)

alessandraelle

**DESCRIPTION:** The glory that was Venice lives on in the Accademia, the definitive treasure house of Venetian painting and one of Europe's great museums. Exhibited chronologically from the 13th through the 18th centuries, the collection features no one hallmark masterpiece in this collection; rather, this is an outstanding and comprehensive showcase of works by all the great master painters of Venice, the largest such collection in the world. It includes Paolo and Lorenzo Veneziano from the 14th century; Gentile and Giovanni Bellini (and Giovanni's brother-in-law Andrea Mantegna from Padua) and Vittore Carpaccio from the 15th century; Giorgione (whose Tempest is one of the gallery's most famous highlights), Tintoretto, Veronese (look for his Feast in the House of Levi here), and Titian from the 16th century; and from the 17th and 18th centuries, Canaletto, Piazzetta, Longhi, and Tiepolo, among others. Most of all, the works open a window to the Venice of 500 years ago. Indeed, the canvases reveal how little Venice has changed over the centuries. Housed in a deconsecrated church and its adjoining scuola, the church's confraternity hall, it is Venice's principal picture gallery, and one of the most important in Italy. Because of fire regulations, admission is limited, and lines can be daunting (check for extended evening hours in peak months), but put up with the wait and don't miss it. © Frommer's

**contact:**  
tel: 041-522-2637

**location:**  
San Polo 3072  
Venice

**hours:**

## 4 Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari (Church of the Frari)

Photo courtesy of Santa  
Maria Gloriosa dei Frari  
(Church of the Frari)

**DESCRIPTION:** Known simply as "i Frari," this immense 13th- to 14th-century Gothic church is easily found around the corner from the Scuola Grande di San Rocco -- make sure you visit both when you're in this area. Built by the Franciscans (frari is a dialectal distortion of "frati," or brothers), it is the largest church in Venice after the Basilica of San Marco. The

Mon-Sat 9am-6pm; Sun  
1-6pm

Frari has long been considered something of a memorial to the ancient glories of Venice. Since St. Francis and the order he founded emphasized prayer and poverty, it is not surprising that the church is austere both inside and out. Yet it houses a number of important works, including two Titian masterpieces. The more striking is his Assumption of the Virgin over the main altar, painted when the artist was only in his late 20s. His Virgin of the Pesaro Family is in the left nave; for this work commissioned by one of Venice's most powerful families, Titian's wife posed for the figure of Mary (and then died soon afterward in childbirth). The church's other masterwork is Giovanni Bellini's important triptych on wood, the Madonna and Child, displayed in the sacristy; it is one of his finest portraits of the Madonna. There is also an almost primitive-looking woodcarving by Donatello of St. John the Baptist. The grandiose tombs of two famous Venetians are also here: Canova (d. 1822), the Italian sculptor who led the revival of classicism, and Titian, who died in 1576 during a deadly plague. Free tours in English are sometimes offered by church volunteers during the high-season months; check at the church. © Frommer's

**contact:**  
tel: 041-523-4864

**location:**  
San Polo 3058  
Venice

**hours:**  
Daily 9am-5:30pm (winter  
hours usually shorter by about  
an hour)

## 5 Scuola Grande di San Rocco (Confraternity of St. Roch)

**DESCRIPTION:** Jacopo Robusti (1518-94), called Tintoretto because his father was a dyer, was a devout, unworldly man who only traveled once beyond Venice. His epic canvases are filled with phantasmagoric light and intense, mystical spirituality. This museum is a dazzling monument to his work -- it holds the largest collection of his images anywhere. The series of the more than 50 dark and dramatic works took the artist more than 20 years to complete, making this the richest of the many confraternity guilds or scuole that once flourished in Venice. Begin upstairs in the Sala dell'Albergo, where the most notable of the enormous, powerful canvases is the moving *La Crocifissione* (The Crucifixion). In the center of the gilt ceiling of the great hall, also upstairs, is *Il Serpente di Bronzo* (The Bronze Snake). Among the eight huge, sweeping paintings downstairs -- each depicting a scene from the New Testament -- *La Strage degli Innocenti* (The Slaughter of the Innocents) is the most noteworthy, so full of dramatic urgency and energy that the figures seem almost to tumble out of the frame. As you enter the room, it's on the opposite wall at the far end of the room. There's a useful guide to the paintings posted inside on the wall just before the entrance to the museum. There are a few Tiepolos among the paintings, as well as a solitary work by Titian. The works on or near the staircase are not by Tintoretto. © Frommer's

Photo courtesy of  
[www.funntouristattractions.com](http://www.funntouristattractions.com)

# Venice Snapshot

## Local Info

### Introduction

Venice, known as La Serenissima or the most serene, has been enchanting travelers for centuries. Decaying buildings never looked so romantic as here, where the muted tones of centuries-old palazzi are mirrored in this city's labyrinth of canals. Glide along the Grand Canal in a gondola, climb to the top of St. Mark's Basilica or just sip a cappuccino in Piazza San Marco. Life is sweet in La Serenissima.

### Things to Do

Venice is a vast, open-air museum, with private gondolas and public vaporetti whisking visitors from gallery to gallery. Along the **Grand Canal** and its narrow tributaries, gaze up at soaring church domes, medieval manors, arching foot bridges and hidden piazzas. Visitors crane their necks and feed their souls absorbing the exquisite ceiling mosaics at Venice's chief attraction, **St. Mark's Basilica**-- an architectural and cultural bridge between Europe and Byzantium.

### Shopping

Cheap gondolier caps and fine Italian leather handbags lure shoppers into storefronts along the **Mercerie**. Zigzagging between the **Rialto Bridge** and **Piazza San Marco**, it's a pleasant street to stroll and browse. It's tough to find a bargain in Venice, a city that's been a trading center for centuries. Focus on quality goods like richly colored Murano glass and delicate Burano lace. A papier-mâché Carnevale mask, sold throughout the city, makes an iconic souvenir or gift.

### Nightlife and Entertainment

A long and rich tradition of classical music permeates Venice. There's always a concert going on somewhere, often in one of the city's majestic churches. The **Chiesa Santa Maria della Pietà**, otherwise known as the Chiesa del Vivaldi, is, not surprisingly, the place to catch that composer's music. Performing arts, from opera and theater to classical music and ballet, fill the halls of the storied **Teatro La Fenice**, a Venice landmark for centuries.

## Restaurants and Dining

The outdoor market, **Il Mercato di Rialto**, makes a perfect lunch stop. Barges deliver mounds of blood oranges and fresh green produce, and vendors sell fresh-baked bread. Locals stop at the neighboring **Cantina do Mori** for a quick wine or to fill up on cicchetti, the Italian equivalent of tapas. Cicchetti are available at almost any bar and range from fried polenta squares to calamari rings. The **Antico Martini** restaurant, dating from 1720, is pricey but risotto is prepared perfectly here, and its outdoor tables across from the opera house are worth a splurge.

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## Hotel Insights

### Hotels

Few cities boast as long a high season as that of Venice, beginning with the Easter period. May, June, and September are the best months weather-wise and, therefore, the most crowded. July and August are hot-- at times unbearably so (few of the one- and two-star hotels offer air-conditioning; when they do it usually costs extra). Like everything else, hotels are more expensive here than in any other Italian city, with no apparent upgrade in amenities. The least special of those below are clean and functional; at best, they're charming and thoroughly enjoyable with the serenade of a passing gondolier thrown in for good measure. Some may even provide you with your best stay in all of Europe.

I strongly suggest that you reserve in advance, even in the off season. If you haven't booked, arrive as early as you can, definitely before noon. The **Hotel Reservations booth** in the train station will book rooms for you, but the lines are long and the staff's patience is often (understandably) thin. For 1€ (\$1.30), they'll try to find you a hotel in the price range of your choice; on confirmation from the hotel, they'll accept your deposit by credit card and issue you a voucher, and you pay the balance on your arrival at the hotel. There is a similar hotel reservations

booth at the airport, but it charges a bit more.

Another alternative to reserve the same day as your arrival is through the **A.V.A.** (Venetian Hoteliers Association), toll-free from within Italy tel. **800-843-006**, 041-522-2264 from abroad, or online at [www.veniceinfo.it](http://www.veniceinfo.it). Simply state the price range you want to book and they'll confirm a hotel while you wait. There are offices at the train station, in Piazzale Roma garages, and in the airport. If you're looking to book on the Lido, contact their sister organization, **A.V.A.L.**, toll-free from within Italy tel. **800-546-788**, 041-595-2466 from abroad, or online at [www.venicehotels.com](http://www.venicehotels.com).

Recent state-imposed ordinances resulted in stringent deadlines for the updating of antiquated electrical, plumbing, and sewage systems-- costly endeavors. To make up for this, small one- and two-star hotels raised their rates, often applying for an upgrade in category for which they're now potentially eligible. Even more properties stuck TVs on the desks and hair dryers in the bathrooms to garner that extra star so they could inflate their rates during the Jubilee Year 2000. Then, of course, came the euro and prices jacked up yet again. The good news is that now you'll have accommodations of a better quality; the bad news is that yesteryear's affordable finds are slowly disappearing. The rates below were compiled in 2007. You can expect an annual increase of anywhere from 2% to 10%, depending on the category, but you might be hit with an increase of as much as 20% if the hotel you pick is one that has been redone recently.

A few peculiarities about Venice hotels have everything to do with the fact that this city built on water does not consistently offer what you might take for granted: elevators, light, and spaciousness. Venice hotels often have tiny bathrooms. The rooms are generally smaller than elsewhere and can be dark, and canal views aren't half as prevalent as we'd like them to be. This doesn't mean that a welcoming family-run hotel in an atmospheric neighborhood can't offer a memorable stay-- just don't expect

## Venice Snapshot continued

the amenities of the Danieli or Grand Canal vistas.

**Seasonal Considerations**-- Most hotels observe high- and low-season rates, though many are gradually adopting a single year-round rate, and the high-end-range hotels generally adapt their prices to availability. In the prices listed below, single figures represent rack rates, because the price varies too widely depending on availability; when a range is listed, they represent low- and high-season rates unless otherwise noted. Of course, you will almost always get a deal when reserving through the hotel website ahead of time. Even where it's not indicated in the listings, be sure to ask when you book or when you arrive at a hotel whether off-season prices are in effect. Check the site for special offers. High season in Venice is about March 15 to November 5, with a lull in July and August (when hotel discounts are often offered). Some small hotels close (sometimes without notice or to do renovation work) November or December until Carnevale, opening for about 2 weeks around Christmas and New Year's at high-season rates.

### Neighborhoods

**Giudecca**-- You don't stay on Giudecca-- the only one of Venice's main islands you must access by boat-- for the atmosphere, the sights, or the hotel scene (though it does host the official IYH Hostel, an utterly average hostel that's terribly inconvenient, especially with its curfew). You come for one reason only: the Cipriani.

**Cannaregio**-- Expect most (but not all) of the least expensive suggestions to be in or near the train-station neighborhood, an area full of trinket shops and budget hotels. It's comparatively charmless (though safe), and in the high season it's wall-to-wall with tourists who window-shop their way to Piazza San Marco, an easy half-hour to 45-minute stroll away. Vaporetto connections from the train station are convenient.

**On the Lido**-- The Lido offers an entirely different Venice experience. The city is relatively close at hand, but you're really here to stay at an Italian beach resort and day-trip into the city for sightseeing.

Although there are a few lower-end, moderately priced hotels here, they are entirely beside the point of the Lido and its jet-set reputation.

If you are looking for a more reasonable option-- and one that's open year-round-- check out the modern **Hotel Belvedere**, Piazzale Santa Maria Elisabetta 4 (tel. **041-526-0115**; fax 041-526-1486; www.belvedere-venezia.com). It's right across from the vaporetto stop, has been in the same family for nearly 150 years, and sports a pretty good restaurant and a free beach cabana. It charges 80€ to 286€ (\$104-\$372) for a double.

### Family-Friendly Hotels

**Albergo ai do Mori**-- Good news for weary legs: The larger, family-oriented rooms are on the lower floors in this elevator-challenged hotel just around the corner from San Marco. Can-do English-speaking Antonella has a solution for every problem.

**Antica Locanda Sturion**-- Scottish-born Helen or her daughter Nicolette will settle you into any of the spacious rooms, two of which provide the special thrill of a Grand Canal view within sight of the famous Rialto Bridge. **One caveat:** The 69-step hike to the lobby may be a deterrent for little ones or for those who haven't mastered the art of traveling lightly.

**Hotel Bernardi-Semenzato**-- Owner Maria Teresa moonlights as an English teacher. As a mother of three, she's the perfect host for families, who will appreciate the renovated rooms that easily pass as triples or quads.

**Pensione Guerrato**-- Young, euro-conscious families will enjoy the inexpensive rates of this former convent, where an informal and casual atmosphere is nurtured by the upbeat brothers-in-law who run it as if it were their home. Kids should get a kick out of being in the middle of the market's hubbub right on the Grand Canal and within steps of the Rialto Bridge. Spacious rooms are an added plus.

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## Restaurants Insights

### Restaurants

Eating cheaply in Venice is not easy, though it's by no means impossible. So plan well and don't rely on the serendipity that may serve you in other cities. If you've qualified for a Rolling Venice card, ask for the discount guide listing dozens of restaurants offering 10% to 30% discounts for cardholders. Bear in mind that compared with Rome and other points south, Venice is a city of early meals: You should be seated by 7:30 to 8:30pm. Most kitchens close at 10 or 10:30pm, even though the restaurant may stay open until 11:30pm or midnight.

**Budget Dining**-- Pizza is the fuel of Naples and bruschetta and crostini (small, open-face sandwiches) the rustic soul food of Florence. In Venice it's stramezzini-- small, triangular white-bread half sandwiches filled with everything from thinly sliced meats and tuna salad to cheeses and vegetables; and cicchetti (tapas-like finger foods such as calamari rings, speared fried olives, potato croquettes, or grilled polenta squares), traditionally washed down with a small glass of wine, or ombra ("some shade from the sun"). Venice offers countless neighborhood bars called bacari and cafes where you can stand or sit with a stramezzino, a selection of cicchetti, a panino (sandwich on a roll), or a toast (grilled ham and cheese sandwich). All of the above will cost approximately 1€ to 3€ (\$1.30-\$3.90) if you stand at the bar, as much as double when seated. Bar food is displayed on the countertop or in glass counters and usually sells out by late afternoon, so don't rely on it for a light dinner, though light lunches are a delight. A concentration of popular, well-stocked bars can be found along the Mercerie shopping strip that connects Piazza San Marco with the Rialto Bridge, the always lively Campo San Luca (look for **Bar Torino**, **Bar Black Jack**, or the character-filled **Leon Bianco** wine bar), and Campo Santa Margherita. Avoid the tired-looking pizza (revitalized only marginally by microwaves) you'll find in most bars; informal sit-down neighborhood pizzerias everywhere offer savory and far fresher renditions for a minimum of 4€ (\$5.20), plus your drink and cover charge-- the perfect lunch or light dinner.

## Venice Snapshot continued

**Fishy Business**-- Eating a meal based on the day's catch (restaurants are legally bound to print on the menu when the fish is frozen) will be a treat but never inexpensive. Keep in mind that the price indicated on the menu commonly refers to *l'etto* (per 100g), a fraction of the full cost (have the waiter estimate the full cost before ordering); larger fish are intended to feed two. Also, avoid splurging on fish or seafood on Mondays when the Fish Market is closed (as are most self-respecting fish-serving restaurants). Those restaurants open on Mondays will be serving you fish bought on Saturday.

**Culinary Delights**-- Venice has a distinguished culinary history, much of it based on its geographical position on the sea and, to a lesser degree, its historical ties with the Orient. You'll see things on Venetian menus you won't see elsewhere, together with local versions of time-tested Italian favorites. For first courses, both pasta and risotto (more liquidy in the Veneto than usual) are commonly prepared with fish or seafood: *risotto alla sepie or alla sepioline* (tinted black by the ink of cuttlefish, also called *risotto nero* or black risotto) *orspaghetti alle vongole or alle vorace* (with clams; clams without their shells are not a good sign!) are two commonly found specialties. Both appear with *frutti di mare*, "fruit of the sea," which can be a little bit of whatever shellfish looked good at the market that morning. *Bigoli*, homemade pasta of whole wheat, is not commonly found elsewhere, while creamy polenta, often served with *gamberetti* (small shrimp) or tiny shrimp called *schie*, or as an accompaniment to *fegato alla veneziana* (calves' liver with onions Venetian style), is a staple of the Veneto. Some of the fish and seafood dishes they do particularly well include *branzino* (a kind of sea bass), *rombo* (turbot or brill), *moeche* (small soft-shelled crab) or *granseola* (crab), and *sarde in saor* (sardines in a sauce of onion, vinegar, pine nuts, and raisins). From a host of good local wines, try the dry white *Tocai* and pinot from the Friuli region and the light, champagne-like *prosecco* that Venetians consume almost like a soft

drink (it is the base of Venice's famous Bellini drink made with white peach purée). Popular red wines include merlot, cabernet, Raboso, and Refosco. The quintessentially Italian Bardolino, Valpolicella, and Soave are from the nearby Veneto area. Grappa, the local firewater, is an acquired taste and is often offered in a dozen variations. Neighborhood *bacari* wine bars provide the chance to taste the fruits of leading wine producers in the grape-rich regions of the Veneto and neighboring Friuli.

### Family-Friendly Restaurants

**Ai Tre Spiedi**-- There's nothing in particular that flags this as kid-friendly, but its genial atmosphere, friendly service, and good cookin' make it welcoming for families. Admittedly, most tables are taken by couples.

**Da Sandro**-- This place offers good pizza and pasta, seating outdoors, and low prices. What more can you ask for?

**Pizzeria ae Oche**-- If the kids are hankering for home and you (rightly) refuse to set foot in a McDonald's, this place is a good compromise; it serves great pizza and pumps rock music through the speakers, and even looks vaguely American-- or at least trattoria-meets-Cracker Barrel.

**Pizzeria/Trattoria al Vecio Canton**-- This spot offers plenty of seating, a good location near San Marco, low prices, and an extensive menu of both pastas and some of the best pizzas in Venice.

**Rosticceria San Bartolomeo**-- There's not much that isn't served at this big, efficient, and bustling fast-food emporio in the Rialto Bridge area. Much of it is displayed in glass cases to pique the fussy appetite, and you won't raise any eyebrows if you eat too little, too much, or at hours when the natives have either finished or haven't yet started.

**Taverna San Trovaso**-- Here you'll find a bustling atmosphere, good-natured waiters, and a lengthy menu that covers all sorts of dishes and pizzas to please finicky youngsters and more adventurous palates alike. Good value-priced menus, too.

### Picnicking

You don't have to eat in a fancy restaurant to have a good time in Venice. Prepare a picnic, and while you eat *alfresco*, you can observe the life of the city's few open piazzas or the aquatic parade on its main thoroughfare, the Grand Canal. And you can still indulge in a late dinner *alla Veneziana*. Plus, doing your own shopping for food can be an interesting experience-- the city has very few supermarkets as we know them, and small *alimentari* (food shops) in the highly visited neighborhoods (where few Venetians live) are scarce.

**Mercato Rialto**-- Venice's principal open-air market is a sight to see, even for nonshoppers. It has two parts, beginning with the produce section, whose many stalls, alternating with that of souvenir vendors, unfold north on the San Polo side of the Rialto Bridge (behind these stalls are a few permanent food stores that sell delicious cheese, cold cuts, and bread selections). The vendors are here Monday to Saturday 7am to 1pm, with a number who stay on in the afternoon.

At the market's farthest point, you'll find the covered **fresh-fish market**, with its carnival atmosphere, picturesquely located on the Grand Canal opposite the magnificent *Ca' d'Oro* and still redolent of the days when it was one of the Mediterranean's great fish markets. The area is filled with a number of small *bacari* bars frequented by market vendors and shoppers where you can join in and ask for your morning's first glass of *prosecco* with *acicchetto* pick-me-up. The fish merchants take Monday off and work mornings only.

**Campo Santa Margherita**-- On this spacious *campo*, Tuesday through Saturday from 8:30am to 1 or 2pm, a number of open-air stalls set up shop, selling fresh fruit and vegetables. You should have no trouble filling out your picnic spread with the fixings available at the various shops lining the sides of the *campo*, including an exceptional *panetteria* (bakery), **Rizzo Pane**, at no. 2772, a *finesalumeria* (deli) at no. 2844, and a good shop for wine, sweets, and other picnic accessories next door. There's even a conventional supermarket,

## Venice Snapshot continued

**Merlini**, just off the campo in the direction of the quasi-adjacent campo San Barnabà at no. 3019. This is also the area where you'll find Venice's heavily photographed **floating market** operating from a boat moored just off San Barnabà at the Ponte dei Pugni. This market is open daily from 8am to 1pm and 3:30 to 7:30pm, except Wednesday afternoon and Sunday. You're almost better off just buying a few freshly prepared sandwiches (panini when made with rolls, tramezzini when made with white bread).

**The Best Picnic Spots**-- Alas, to stay behind and picnic in Venice means you won't have much in the way of green space (it's not worth the boat ride to the Giardini Pubblici past the Arsenale, Venice's only green park). An enjoyable alternative is to find some of the larger piazzas or campi that have park benches, and in some cases even a tree or two to shade them, such as Campo San Giacomo dell'Orto (in the quiet sestiere of Santa Croce). The two most central are **Campo Santa Margherita** (sestiere of Dorsoduro) and **Campo San Polo** (sestiere of San Polo). For a picnic with a view, scout out the **Punta della Dogana area (Customs House)** near La Salute Church for a prime viewing site at the mouth of the Grand Canal. It's located directly across from the Piazza San Marco and the Palazzo Ducale-- pull up on a piece of the embankment here and watch the flutter of water activity against a canvaslike backdrop deserving of the Accademia Museum. In this same area, the small **Campo San Vio** near the Guggenheim is directly on the Grand Canal (not many campi are) and even boasts a bench or two.

If you want to create a real Venice picnic, you'll have to take the no. 12 boat out to the near-deserted island of **Torcello**, with a hamper full of bread, cheese, and wine, and reenact the romantic scene between Katharine Hepburn and Rossano Brazzi from the 1950s film *Summertime*.

But perhaps the best picnic site of all is in a **patch of sun on the marble steps** leading down to the water of the Grand Canal, at the foot of the Rialto Bridge on the San

Polo side. There is no better ringside seat for the Canalazzo's passing parade.

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## Nightlife Insights

### Nightlife

Visit one of the tourist information centers for current English-language schedules of the month's special events. The monthly *Ospite di Venezia* is distributed free or online at [www.unospitedivenezia.it](http://www.unospitedivenezia.it) and is extremely helpful but usually available only in the more expensive hotels. If you're looking for serious nocturnal action, you're in the wrong town. Your best bet is to sit in the moonlit Piazza San Marco and listen to the cafes' outdoor orchestras, with the illuminated basilica before you-- the perfect opera set.

### The Performing Arts

Venice has a long and rich tradition of classical music, and there's always a concert going on somewhere. Several churches regularly host classical-music concerts (with an emphasis on the baroque) by local and international artists. This was, after all, the home of Vivaldi, and the **Chiesa di Vivaldi** (officially the Chiesa Santa Maria della Pietà) is the most popular venue for the music of Vivaldi and his contemporaries. A number of other churches and confraternities (such as San Stefano, San Stae, the Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista, and the Scuola di San Rocco) also host concerts, but the Vivaldi Church, where the Red Priest was the choral director, offers perhaps the highest quality ensembles. If you're lucky, they'll be performing *Le Quattro Stagioni* (The Four Seasons). Tickets are sold at the church's box office (tel. **041-917-257** or 041-522-6405; [www.vivaldi.it](http://www.vivaldi.it)) on Riva degli Schiavoni, at the front desk of the Metropole Hotel next door, or at many of the hotels around town; they're usually 25€ (\$33) for adults and 15€ (\$20) for students. Information and schedules are available from the tourist office; tickets for most concerts should be bought in advance, though they rarely sell out.

The city still remembers well when the famous **Teatro La Fenice** (San Marco 1965, on Campo San Fantin; tel. **041-786-562**; [www.teatrolafenice.it](http://www.teatrolafenice.it)) went up in flames in January 1996. For centuries it was Venice's principal stage for world-class opera, music, theater, and ballet. Carpenters and artisans were on standby to begin working around the clock to re-create the teatro (built in 1836) according to archival designs. Finally, on December 14, 2003, La Fenice (which means "the Phoenix") arose from the ashes as Ricardo Muti conducted the Orchestra and Chorus of La Fenice in an inaugural concert in a completely renovated hall. Then, after a few other performances, on December 21, it closed its doors again for further restoration, which lasted until 2004. Its performances now follow a regular schedule, hopefully for good.

### Cafes

Venice is a quiet town in the evening and offers very little in the way of nightlife. For tourists and locals alike, Venetian nightlife mainly centers on the many cafe/bars in one of the world's most remarkable piazzas: Piazza San Marco. It is also the most expensive and touristed place to linger over a Campari or cappuccino, but a splurge that should not be dismissed too readily.

One of the most atmospheric and hidden places to have aspritz (soda water, white wine, and your choice of Campari or Aperol) is in the newly opened **Taverna del Campiello Remer** (Cannaregio 5701; tel. **349-336-5168**) in the courtyard of the same name, right on the Grand Canal close to the Rialto bridge. That it only opened in 2007 and hasn't yet stood the test of time is why it is not listed under "Where to Dine," even though the locals already laud the fresh fish offerings. The nightly live music-- feel free to get up and sing, if you're any good-- along with the expertly staffed bar, extensive wine list, and big portions of prosciutto and melon, are a recipe for a romantic night out, especially in this magically restored cantina, right by the canal. It generally stays open until at least 1am (closed Wed).

The nostalgic 18th-century **Caffè Florian** (San Marco 56A-59A; tel.

## Venice Snapshot continued

**041-520-5641**), on the south side of the piazza, is the most famous (closed Wed in winter) and most theatrical inside; have a Bellini (prosecco and fresh peach nectar) at the back bar for half what you'd pay at an indoor table; alfresco seating is even more expensive when the band plays on, but it's worth every cent. It's said that when Casanova escaped from the prisons in the Doge's Palace, he stopped here for a coffee before fleeing Venice.

On the opposite side of the square at San Marco 133-134 is the old-world **Caffè Lavena** (tel. **041-522-4070**; closed Tues in winter), and at no. 120 is **Caffè Quadri** (tel. **041-522-2105**; www.quadrivenice.com; closed Mon in winter), the first to introduce coffee to Venice, with a restaurant upstairs that sports Piazza San Marco views. At all spots, a cappuccino, tea, or Coca-Cola at a table will set you back about 5€ (\$6.50). But no one will rush you, and if the sun is warm and the orchestras are playing, there's no more beautiful public open-air salon in the world. Around the corner (no. 11) and in front of the pink-and-white marble Palazzo Ducale is the best deal, **Caffè Chioggia** (tel. **041-528-5011**; closed Sun). Come here at midnight and watch the Moors strike the hour atop the Clock Tower from your outside table, while the quartet or pianist plays everything from quality jazz to pop until the wee hours.

If the weather is chilly or inclement, or for no other reason than to revel in the history and drama of Venice's grand-dame hotel, dress up and stroll into the landmark lobby of the Danieli hotel and **Bar Dandolo** (tel. **041-522-6480**; Castello 4196 on Riva degli Schiavoni, east of Piazza San Marco). Tea or coffee will only set you back 5€ (\$6.50) and you can sit forever, taking in the former residential palazzo of a 15th-century doge. A pianist plays from 7 to 9pm and from 10pm to 12:30am. Drinks are far more expensive; ask for the price list before ordering.

### Clubs, Birrerie, Gelaterie

Although Venice boasts an old and prominent university, clubs and discos barely enjoy their 15 minutes of popularity before changing hands or closing

down (some are only open in the summer months). Young Venetians tend to go to the Lido or mainland Mestre.

For just plain hanging out in the late afternoon and early evening, popular squares that serve as meeting points include **Campo San Bartolomeo**, at the foot of the Rialto Bridge, and nearby **Campo San Luca**; you'll see Venetians of all ages milling about engaged in animated conversation, particularly from 5pm until dinnertime. In late-night hours, for low prices and low pretension, I'm fond of the **Campo Santa Margherita**, a huge open campo about halfway between the train station and Ca' Rezzonico. Look for the popular **Green Pub** (no. 3053; closed Thurs), **Bareto Rosso** (no. 2963; closed Sun), and **Bar Salus** (no. 3112). **Campo Santo Stefano** is also worth a visit to sit and sample the goods at the **Bar/Gelateria Paolin** (no. 2962; closed Fri), one of the city's best ice-cream sources. Its runner-up, **Gelateria Nico**, is on the Zattere in Dorsoduro 922, south of the Gallerie dell'Accademia. For occasional evenings of live music, cabaret, or just a relaxed late-night hangout, consider the ever popular **Le Bistrot de Venise**.

**Note:** Most bars are open Monday to Saturday from 8pm to midnight.

The **Devil's Forest Pub**, San Marco 5185, on Calle Stagneri (tel. **041-520-0623**; vaporetto: San Marco), offers the outsider an authentic chance to take in the convivial atmosphere and find out where Venetians hang out. It's popular for lunch with the neighborhood merchants and shop owners, and ideal for relaxed socializing over a beer and a host of games like backgammon, chess, and Trivial Pursuit. A variety of simple pasta dishes and fresh sandwiches run about 5€ to 6€ (\$6.50-\$7.80). It's open daily 10am to 1am.

**Bácaro Jazz** (tel. **041-285-249**; vaporetto: Rialto) is a happening cocktail bar (the Bellinis are great) with restaurant seating in the back (tasty Venetian cuisine from 6.50€/\$8.50) across from the Rialto post office at San Marco 5546, just north of Campo San Bartolomeo (the San Marco side of Rialto

Bridge). It's a mix of jazzy music (a bit too loud), rough plank walls, industrial-steel tables, and a corrugated aluminum ceiling. It's open Thursday to Tuesday 11am to 2am (happy hour 2-7:30pm).

With a half-dozen beers on tap, **El Moro Pub**, at Castello 4531 (Calle delle Rasse; tel. **041-528-2573**), is the biggest draw in town. The crowd can be a bit older here, where post-university types congregate at the bar. TVs sometimes transmit national soccer or tennis matches, and the management welcomes those who linger, but sensitive nonsmokers won't want to.

Good food at reasonable prices would be enough to regularly pack **Paradiso Perduto**, Cannaregio 2540, on Fondamenta della Misericordia (tel. **041-720-581**; vaporetto: Ferrovie), but its biggest draw is the live jazz performed on a small stage several nights a week. Popular with Americans and other foreigners living in Venice, this bar was once largely devoid of tourists, primarily because of its hard-to-find location, but lately it looks as if the word is out. The good selection of well-prepared pizzas and pastas goes for under 8€ (\$10); arrive early for a table. It's open Thursday to Tuesday 7pm to 1 or sometimes 2am.

The party spills well out from the plate-glass windows of **Torino@Notte**, San Marco 459 (Campo San Luca; tel. **041-522-3914**), a bar that has brought this square to life after dark with live jazz many nights, unusual beer from Lapland, and good panini. It's open Tuesday to Sunday 10pm to 2am.

In 1932, famed restaurateur and hotelier Giuseppe Cipriani opened **Harry's Bar** right at the San Marco-Vallaresso Vaporetto stop, San Marco 1323 (Calle Vallaresso; tel. **041-528-5777**). Named for his son Arrigo (Italian for Harry), it has been a preferred retreat for everyone from Hemingway-- when he didn't want a bloody mary, he mixed his own drink: 15 parts gin, 1 martini-- to Woody Allen. Regulars prefer the elegant front room to the upstairs dining room (the cooking is decent, and they invented carpaccio, a dish of thinly sliced raw beef now served throughout

## Venice Snapshot continued

Italy). Harry's is most famous for inventing the Bellini, a mix of champagne and peach juice. Prices-- for both drinks and the fancy cuisine-- are rather extravagant.

### Dance Clubs

Venice is a quiet town at night and offers little in the line of dance clubs. Evenings are best spent lingering over a late dinner, having a pint in a birreria, or nursing a glass of prosecco in one of Piazza San Marco's tony outdoor cafes.

If you really need that disco fix, you're best off at **Piccolo Mondo**, Dorsoduro 1056, near the Accademia (tel. **041-520-0371**; vaporetto: Accademia). Billed as a disco/pub, it serves sandwiches during lunch to the sounds of America's latest dance music, offers a happy hour in the late afternoon in winter, and often features live music. But the only reason you'd want to come is if you want a disco night (summer only); the club is frequented mostly by curious foreigners and the young to not-so-young Venetians who seek them out. It's open daily from 10pm to 4am in summer, and 10am to 4pm and 5 to 8pm in winter.

Another dance club that seems to be surviving is **Casanova** (tel. **041-275-0199** or 041-534-7479), near the train station on Lista di Spagna 158A. The bar and restaurant open at 6pm, but at 10pm the bar becomes a disco open until 4am (the restaurant stays open until midnight). Admission is often free (if you arrive before midnight), though sometimes there's a 5€ (\$6.50) or higher cover that includes the first drink. Wednesday is salsa night; Thursday is rock, pop, alternative, and indie; Friday is dance music; and Saturday brings in house and progressive DJ music.

### The Casino

From May to October, **Casino Municipale di Venezia**, located at Palazzo Vendramin Calergi, Cannaregio 2040 (Fondamenta Vendramin; vaporetto: Marcuola; tel. **041-529-7111**; www.casinovenetia.it), moves to its nondescript summer location on the Lido, where a visit is not as strongly recommended as during the winter months when it is housed in this handsome 15th-century palazzo on the Grand Canal.

Venice's tradition of gambling goes back to the glory days of the republic and lives on in this august Renaissance palace built by Mauro Codussi. Though not of the caliber of Monte Carlo, and on a midweek winter's night, occasionally slow, this is one of only four casinos on Italian territory-- and what a remarkable stage setting it is! Richard Wagner lived and died in a wing of this palazzo in 1883.

Check with your hotel before setting forth; some offer free passes for their guests. Otherwise, if you're not a gambler or a curiosity seeker, it may not be worth the admission cost of 5€ (\$6.50) to get in. **Tip:** If you pay a higher 10€ (\$13) admission fee, the casino will provide you with a 10€ (\$13) credit for gambling, so your admission could actually be free-- and perhaps, if you're lucky, better than free. **Note:** A passport and jacket are required for entrance, and the casino is open daily from 3pm (11am for the slots) to 3am. © 2000-2010 by Wiley Publishing, Inc.

## Things to Do Insights

### Frommer's Favorite Experiences

#### Riding the Grand Canal in a Gondola:

Just before sunset, order some delectable sandwiches from Harry's Bar and a bottle of chilled prosecco, then take someone you love on a gondola ride along the Grand Canal for the boat trip of a lifetime.

#### Sipping Cappuccino on Piazza San

**Marco:** Select a choice spot on one of the world's most famous squares, order a cappuccino, listen to the classical music, and absorb the special atmosphere of Venice.

**Sunning on the Lido:** The world has seen better beaches, but few sights equal the parade of flesh and humanity of this fashionable beach on a hot summer day.

#### Contemplating Giorgione's Tempest:

If you have time to see only one painting, make it this one at the Accademia. The artist's haunting sense of oncoming menace superimposed over a bucolic setting will stay with you long after you leave Venice.

**Spending a Day on Torcello:** Of all the islands in the lagoon, our favorite

is Torcello, the single best day trip from Piazza San Marco. Visit to see Santa Maria Assunta, the first cathedral of Venice and home to splendid 11th- and 12th-century mosaics. But also come to explore the island, wandering around at leisure in a place time seems to have forgotten. Follow your discoveries with a lunch of cannelloni at Locanda Cipriani, and the day is yours.

#### Making a Pub Crawl in Search of

**Cicchetti:** There's no better way to escape the tourists and mingle with locals than wandering Venice's back streets in search of local color, drink, and cicchetti (the local version of tapas). By the time you've made the rounds, you'll have had a great time and a full meal-- everything from deep-fried mozzarella and artichoke hearts to mixed fish fries and pizza. Finish, of course, with an ice cream at a gelateria. A good place to start a pub-crawl is Campo San Bartolomeo near the Rialto Bridge-- one of Venice's authentic neighborhoods.

#### Paying a Visit to the World's Greatest

**Outdoor Market:** When you tire of Gothic glory and High Renaissance masterpieces, head for the Il Mercato di Rialto. Here you can see what the Venetians are going to have for dinner. Barges, or mototopi, arrive throughout the day loaded with the rich produce of the Veneto area. Somehow, blood-red oranges are bloodier here, fresh peas more tender and greener than elsewhere, and red radicchios redder. Sample a pastry fresh from a hot oven at some little hole in the wall, then cap your visit at the vendors' favorite place, the Cantina do Mori, where you can belt down a glass of wine made from Tocai grapes. There's been a tavern at this site since 1462.

#### Wandering Around Dorsoduro:

Dorsoduro attracts everybody coming to see the Peggy Guggenheim Collection or the Accademia-- but few stick around to explore the neighborhood in any depth. Susanna Agnelli, sister of Gianni Versace, keeps a place here, as do many wealthy industrialists who could afford to live anywhere. Yet parts are so seedy as to look haunted. The most intriguing promenade is the Zattere, running the length of the district along the Giudecca Canal.

## Venice Snapshot continued

**Visiting the Island of the Dead:** For a Venetian, "the last gondola ride" is to San Michele, in a traditional funeral gondola decorated with golden angels. San Michele is a walled cemetery island shaded by massive cypresses, and there's no place quite like it. Celebrities are buried here, but so are ordinary Venetians. Time stands still in more ways than one at this cemetery. There's no more room here; today, Venice has to send its dead to the mainland for burial. But poet Ezra Pound, who lived in Venice from 1959 until his death in 1972, made it just in time.

**Seeing the Sun Rise on the Lagoon:** For us, there's no more enthralling experience than to get up before dawn and cross the lagoon to San Giorgio Maggiore. Architect Andrea Palladio knew exactly what he was doing when he created the church on this exact spot. The church faces Piazza San Marco and the entrance to the Grand Canal. While the tourist zillions are still asleep, waiting to overtake the city, you'll have Venice to yourself as the sun comes up. The architectural ensemble seen in the first glow of dawn, the panorama in all directions as the city awakens, ranks as one of the greatest man-made spectacles on earth.

**Experiencing Venice at 2am:** You'll truly know the meaning of the word spectacular when sitting at 2am on an outdoor seat on vaporetto no. 1 as it circles Venice. Only the most diehard night owls will be onboard with you. With its twinkling lights and "Titian blue" skies, Venice at this time takes on an aura unique in Europe. It's very quiet at this hour (except for the sound of the vaporetto's motor). Perhaps a gondola will silently glide by. The buildings themselves take on a different mood and color, looking like ghostly mansions from another time. When you get back home, this experience may be the one that lingers longer in your memory than any other.

### Attractions

Venice is notorious for changing and extending the opening hours of its museums and, to a lesser degree, its churches. Before you begin your exploration of Venice's sights, ask at the

tourist office for the season's list of museum and church hours. During the peak months, you can enjoy extended museum hours-- some places stay open until 7 or even 10pm. Unfortunately, these hours are not released until approximately Easter of every year. Even then, little is done to publicize the information, so you'll have to do your own research.

### Church Tours

Check with a tourist office for free tours being offered (erratically and usually during high season) in some of the churches, particularly the Basilica di San Marco and occasionally the Frari.

**For Church Fans--** The **Associazione Chiese di Venezia** (tel. **041-275-0462**; [www.chorusvenezia.org](http://www.chorusvenezia.org)) now curates most of Venice's top churches. A visit to one of the association's churches costs 2.50€(\$3.25); most are open Monday to Saturday 10am to 5pm and Sunday 1 to 5pm. The churches are closed Sundays in July and August. If you plan to visit more than four churches, buy the 8€(\$10) ticket (valid for 1 year), which allows you to visit all of the following churches: Santa Maria del Giglio, Santo Stefano, Santa Maria Formosa, Santa Maria dei Miracoli, Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari (reviewed here), San Polo, San Giacomo dell'Orto, San Stae, Alvise, Madonna dell'Orto, San Pietro di Castello, Il Redentore (reviewed here), San Sebastiano (reviewed here), and San Marco cathedral's treasury. The association also has audio guides available at some of the churches for 50€(65¢).

### Venice Discounts

The newly created **Museum Pass** grants admission to all the city-run museums. That is, all the museums of St. Mark's Square: Palazzo Ducale, Museo Correr, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, and the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana-- as well as to the Museo di Palazzo Mocenigo (Costume Museum), the recently restored Ca' Rezzonico, the Museo del Vetro (Glass Museum) on Murano, and the Museo di Merletto (Lace Museum) on Burano. It's available at any of the participating museums. From November to March it costs 12€(\$16) for adults, 6€(\$7.80) for

children 6 to 14; from April to October, it's 13€(\$17) for adults, 7.50€(\$10) for children; both are valid for one entry into each attraction, while the summer version includes entrance to a civic museum of your choice outside of St. Mark's Square.

Venice, so delicate it cannot handle the hordes of visitors it receives every year, has been toying with the idea of charging admission to get into the very city itself. Slightly calmer heads seem to have prevailed, though, and instead we have the **Venice Card** (tel. **899-909-090** in Italy or 041-271-4747 outside Italy; [www.venicecard.it](http://www.venicecard.it)). The **blu** version will get you free passage on buses and vaporetti, usage of public toilets (you are allowed two visits per day, so use them wisely!), 20% to 30% discounts on parking, and a price of 5€(\$6.50), rather than 8€(\$10), for the churches pass. The **orange** version adds to these services admission to all the sights covered under the expanded version of the **Museum Pass** plus the Ca' Rezzonico; additionally, the card lets you bypass the often long lines. There are versions that include a ride into town from the airport, but that doesn't save you any money in the long run, so skip it. (They're working on arranging reserved, timed entries-- the logic being that so many people will have this card, the main sights will be effectively booked up, thus discouraging visitors who arrive without the card.) They're also encouraging various merchants to jump on the bandwagon in some way.

Also, for tourists between the ages of 14 and 29 there is the Rolling Venice card, which is something akin to the Venice Card for students. It costs just 4€(\$5.20) and entitles the bearer to significant (20%-30%) discounts at participating restaurants, and a similar discount on traghetto tickets.

For adults (and in student-friendly Venice, this means 30 and over), the blu card costs 19€(\$25) for 12 hours, 34€(\$44) for 48 hours, or 56€(\$73) for 7 days; for ages 4 to 29, the blu card costs 17€(\$22) for 12 hours, 31€(\$40) for 48 hours, or 53€(\$69) for 7 days. For adults, the orange card costs 30€(\$39) for 12 hours, 55€(\$72) for 48 hours, or 82€(\$107) for 7 days; for ages 4 to 29, the orange card costs 23€(\$30)

## Venice Snapshot continued

for 12 hours, 47€(\$61) for 48 hours, or 73€(\$95) for 7 days. You can order it in advance by phone or online, for a 1€(\$1.30) discount on each card, and they'll tell you where to pick it up.

Anyone age 16 to 29 is eligible for the terrific **Rolling Venice pass**, which gives discounts in museums, restaurants, stores, language courses, hotels, and bars across the city(it comes with a thick booklet listing everywhere that you're entitled to get discounts). It's valid for 1 year and costs 2.60€(\$3.40). Year-round, you can pick one up at the **Informagiovani Assessorato alla Gioventù**, Corte Contarina 1529, off the Frezzeria west of St. Mark's Square(tel. **041-274-7645** or 041-274-7650), which is open Monday to Friday 9:30am to 1pm, plus Tuesday and Thursday 3 to 5pm. July to September you can stop by the special Rolling Venice office set up in the train station daily 8am to 8pm; in winter you can get the pass at the Transalpino travel agency just outside the station's front doors and to the right, at the top of the steps; it's open Monday to Friday 8:30am to 12:30pm and 3 to 7pm and Saturday 8:30am to 12:30pm.

**Another Cumulative Ticket**-- One ticket covers entrance to both the **Ca' d'Oro** and the **Ca Pesaro** for 5.50€(\$7.15); a cumulative ticket including the **Accademia** costs 11€(\$14).

### Shopping

A mix of low-end trinket stores and middle-market-to-upscale boutiques line the narrow zigzagging **Mercerie** running north between Piazza San Marco and the Rialto Bridge. More expensive clothing and gift boutiques make for great window-shopping on **Calle Larga XXII Marzo**, the wide street that begins west of Piazza San Marco and wends its way to the expansive Campo Santo Stefano near the Accademia. The narrow **Frezzeria**, also west of the piazza and not far from Piazza San Marco, offers a grab bag of bars, souvenir shops, and tony clothing stores.

In a city that for centuries has thrived almost exclusively on tourism, remember this: **Where you buy cheap, you get cheap**. There are few bargains to be had;

the nonproduce part of the Rialto Market is as good as it gets, where you'll find cheap T-shirts, glow-in-the-dark plastic gondolas, and tawdry glass trinkets. Venetians, centuries-old merchants, aren't known for bargaining. You'll stand a better chance of getting a bargain if you pay in cash or buy more than one item.

Venice is uniquely famous for local crafts that have been produced here for centuries and are hard to get elsewhere: the **glassware** from Murano, the **delicate lace** from Burano, and the **cartapesta(papier-mâché) Carnevale masks** you'll find in endlessbotteghe, where you can watch artisans paint amid their wares.

Now here's the bad news: There's such an overwhelming sea of cheap glass gewgaws that buying Venetian glass can become something of a turnoff(shipping and insurance costs make most things unaffordable; the alternative is to hand-carry anything fragile). There are so few women left on Burano willing to spend countless tedious hours keeping alive the art of lace-making that the few pieces you'll see not produced by machine in Hong Kong are sold at stratospheric prices; ditto the truly high-quality glass(though trinkets can be cheap and fun). Still, exceptions are to be found in all of the above, and when you find them you'll know. A discerning eye can cut through the dreck to find some lovely mementos.

**Venice Shopping Strategies**-- There are two rules of thumb for shopping in Venice: If you have the good fortune of continuing on to Florence or Rome, shop for clothing, leather goods, and accessories with prudence in Venice, because most items are more expensive here. If, however, you happen on something that strikes you, consider it twice on the spot(not back at your hotel), and then buy it. In this web of alleys, you may never find that shop again.

### Antiques

The interesting **Mercatino dell'Antiquariato(Antiques Fair)** takes place three times annually in the charming Campo San Maurizio between Piazza San Marco and Campo Santo Stefano. Dates change yearly for the 3-day weekend

market but generally fall the first weekend of April, mid-September, and the weekend before Christmas. More than 100 vendors sell everything from the sublime piece of Murano glass to quirky dust-collectors. Early birds might find reasonably priced finds such as Murano candy dishes from the 1950s, Venetian-pearl glass beads older still, vintage Italian posters advertising Campari-sponsored regattas, or antique postcards of Venice that could be from the 1930s or the 1830s-- things change so little here. Those for whom price is less an issue might pick up antique lace by the yard or a singular museum-quality piece of handblown glass from a local master.

### Books

**Libreria Studium**, San Marco 337(tel. **041-522-2382**), carries lots of travel guides and maps as well as books in English. Another good choice is **Libreria al Ponte**, Calle della Mandola, 3717D(tel. **041-522-4030**), which stocks travel guides and English-language books. Two other centrally located bookstores are the **Libreria Sansovino** in the Bacino Orseolo 84, just north of the Piazza San Marco(tel. **041-522-2623**), and the **Libreria San Giorgio**, Calle Larga XXII Marzo 2087(tel. **041-523-8451**), beyond the American Express Office toward Campo Santo Stefano. Both carry a selection of books about Venetian art, history, and literature.

For art books and other colorful hardbacks on history and Italian sights to hold down your coffee table at 40% to 50% off, head to **Libreria Bertoni Mario**, San Marco 3637B(Rio Terrà dei Assassini; tel. **041-522-9583**), or **Libreria Beronti Alberto**, San Marco 4718(Calle dei Fabbri; tel. **041-522-4615**).

### Crafts

The **Murano Art Shop**, at San Marco 1232(on the store-lined Frezzeria, parallel to the western border of, and close to, the Piazza San Marco; tel. **041-523-3851**), is a cultural experience. At this small shop, every inch of wall space is draped with the whimsical crafts of the city's most creative artisans. Fusing the timeless with the contemporary-- with a nod to the magic and romance of Venice past-- the store offers a

## Venice Snapshot continued

dramatic and evolving collection of masks, puppets, music boxes, costume jewelry, and the like. It's all expensive, but this rivals a visit to the Doge's Palace.

When it seems as if every gift-store window is awash with collectible bisque-faced dolls in elaborate pinafores and headdresses, head to **Bambole di Trilly**, at Castello 4974 (Fondamenta dell'Osmarin, off the Campo San Provolo on your way east out of Piazza San Marco in the direction of the Church of San Zaccaria; tel. **041-521-2579**), where the hand-sewn wardrobes of rich Venetian fabrics and painstakingly painted faces are particularly exquisite. The perfect souvenir starts at about 20€ (\$26) in this well-stocked workspace north of Campo San Zaccaria.

### Foodstuffs

Food lovers will find charmingly packaged food products for themselves or friends at the well-known pasta manufacturer **Giacomo Rizzo**, near the major Coin department store, northeast of the Rialto Bridge at Cannaregio 5778 at Calle San Giovanni Grisostomo (tel. **041-522-2824**). You'll find pasta made in the shape of gondolas, colorful carnival hats, and dozens of other imaginatively shaped possibilities (colored and flavored with squash, beet, and spinach).

Those with a sweet tooth should head in the opposite direction, to Giancarlo Vio's **Pasticceria Marchini**, just before Campo Santo Stefano (San Marco 2769 at Ponte San Maurizio; tel. **041-522-9109**), where the selection of traditional cookies are beautifully prepackaged for traveling-- delicate baicoli, cornmeal raisin zaleti, and the S-shaped buranelli.

### Glass

If you're going to go all out, look no further than **Venini**, Piazzetta dei Leoni 314 (tel. **041-522-4045**), since 1921 one of the most respected and innovative glassmakers in all of Venice. Their products are more works of art than merely blown glass. So renowned are they for their quality, Versace's own line of glass objets d'art are done by Venini. Their **workshop** on Murano is at Fondamenta Vetrai 50 (tel. **041-273-7211**). Cheap they are not, but no one else has

such a lovely or original representation of handblown Murano glassware.

You should also visit the spacious emporium of quality glass items at **Marco Polo** (San Marco 1644; tel. **041-522-9295**), just west of the Piazza San Marco. The front half of the first floor offers a variety of small gift ideas (candy dishes, glass-topped medicine boxes, paperweights).

Glass beads are called "Venetian pearls," and an abundance of exquisite antique and reproduced baubles are the draw at **Anticlea**, at Castello 4719 (on the Campo San Provolo in the direction of the Church of San Zaccaria; tel. **041-528-6946**). Once used for trading in Venice's far-flung colonies, they now fill the coffers of this small shop east of Piazza San Marco, sold singly or already strung. The open-air stall of **Susie and Andrea** (Riva degli Schiavoni, near Pensione Wildner; just ask) has handcrafted beads that are new, well made and strung, and moderately priced. The stall operates from February through November.

### Jewelry

**Chimento**, San Marco 1460 (Campo S. Moisè; tel. **041-523-6010**; www.chimento.it), carries gold and silver jewelry of their own manufacture as well as items from top international designers, including Faberge.

Tiny **Antichità Zaggia**, Dorsoduro 1195 (Calle della Toletta; tel. **041-522-3159**), specializes in genuine antique jewelry (and glassware) of the highest quality and beautiful designs.

The jewelers at **Esperienze**, Cannaregio 326B (Ponte delle Guglie; tel. **041-721-866**), marry their own art with the local glass-blowing traditions to create unique pins, necklaces, and other jewelry.

### Leather & Shoes

One usually thinks of Florence when thinking of Italian leather goods. But the plethora of mediocre-to-refined shoe stores in Venice is testimony to the tradition of small shoe factories along the nearby Brenta canal that supply most of Italy, and much of the world, with made-in-Italy footwear. Venice has plenty of fine

shoe stores-- including **Bruno Magli**, San Marco 1302 (Calle dell'Ascensione; tel. **041-522-7210**), and **Mori e Bozzi**, Cannaregio 2367 (Rio Terrà della Madonna; tel. **041-715-261**)-- but one store deserves singling out for sheer oddness. Even if you're not in the market for shoes, stop by **Rolando Segalin**, San Marco 4365 (Calle dei Fuseri; tel. **041-522-2115**), for fantastical footwear in an acid-trip of colors and shapes, including curly-toed creations; many are intended for Carnevale costumes.

If you're not going on to Florence and are in the market for leather goods, the two-story **Marforio shop**, very near the Rialto Bridge (on the Merceria 2 Aprile 5033; tel. **041-25-734**), stocks small leather goods and accessories on the street level, and bags according to color and style (evening, casual, shoulder-strapped, backpack style) on the floors above. It's not a good place just to browse, but it's a great spot if you know what you're looking for. There are some designer labels, but less expensive lines are abundant, and the selection is probably the largest in Venice.

### Linens & Lace

A doge's ransom will buy you an elaborately worked tablecloth at **Jesurum**, at Cannaregio 3219 (tel. **041-524-2540**), with another shop at Piazza San Marco 60-61 (tel. **041-520-6177**; www.jesurum.it), but some of the small items make gorgeous, affordable gifts for discerning friends for under 10€ (\$13): small drawstring pouches for your baubles, hand-embroidered linen cocktail napkins in different colors, or hand-finished lace doilies and linen coasters.

**Frette**, San Marco 2070A (Calle Larga/ Via XXII Marzo; tel. **041-522-4914**; www.frette.com), is another long-respected place to head for classy linens, bedclothes, and silk jammies. They'll even do custom work for you.

For hand-tatted lace from the only school still teaching it in Venice, ride out to Burano to visit the **Scuola dei Merletti**, Piazza B. Galuppi (tel. **041-730-034**), founded in 1872, closed in 1972, and reopened in 1981.

### Masks

## Venice Snapshot continued

A shortage of maskbottegas in Venice is not a problem; the challenge is ferreting out the few exceptionally talented artists producing one-of-a-kind theatrical pieces. Only the quality-conscious should shop at **La Bottega dei Mascareri** (San Polo 80-- at the northern end of the Rialto Bridge amid the tourist booths; tel. **041-522-3857**), where the charming Boldrin brothers' least-elaborate masks begin under 20€ (\$26). Anyone who thinks a mask is a mask is a mask should come here first for a look-see.

Not only does **Il Canovaccio**, Castello 5369-70 (Calle delle Bande; tel. **041-521-0393**), produce high-quality artisan work, but it's undeniably cool. Rolling Stone guitarist Ron Wood has shopped here, and the shop provided the masks and costumes for the orgy scene in Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut*.

### Music

If you attended any of the many marvelous concerts in Venice's churches and scuole, you'll want to bring some of the musical magic home with you. **Nalesso** (San Marco 2765, on your left just before Campo Santo Stefano if you're arriving from the Piazza San Marco area; tel. **041-520-3329**) specializes in classical-music recordings, particularly the entire works of Vivaldi and 18th-century Venetian music, and carries the widest selection in town. You can also pick up tickets here to most of the concerts around town.

### Paper Products

**Biblos**, with shops in San Marco at 739 (Mercerie S. Zulian), 2087 (Via XXII Marzo), and 221 (Mercerie de l'Orologio; tel. **041-521-0714** or 041-521-908; [www.biblos-venezia.com](http://www.biblos-venezia.com)), carries leather-bound blank books and journals, marbled paper, enamel pill boxes, watercolor etchings, and fountain pens. If you're a real fan of marbling, the tiny workshop of **Ebrù di Federica Novello**, San Marco 1920 (Calle della Fenice; tel. **041-528-6302**), applies the technique to silk ties and scarves as well as paper.

### Wine

For a broad selection of wines from the Veneto and across Italy at truly decent

prices, head to **Bottiglieria Colonna**, Castello 5595 (Calle della Fava; tel. **041-528-5137**), which will put together gift packets of wines in packs of six, and also handles liqueurs from around the world. There's a more down-to-earth cantina called **Nave de Oro**, Cannaregio 4657 (Rio Terrà dei SS. Apostoli; tel. **041-522-7872**), where locals bring empty bottles to have them filled with a variety of Veneto table wines at low, low prices-- around 2€ (\$2.60) per liter.

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## Travel Tips

### Planning a Trip

**Tourist Offices**-- There's a small office in the train station, but the main office is located right when you get off the vaporetto at the San Marco stop, in a stone pavilion wedged between the small green park on the Grand Canal called the Giardinetti Reali and the famous Harry's Bar. It's called the **Venice Pavilion/Palazzina dei Santi** (tel. **041-529-8710** or 041-522-5150; [www.turismovenetia.it](http://www.turismovenetia.it); vaporetto: San Marco) and is, frankly, more interested in running its gift shop than in helping tourists. It's open daily from 10am to 6pm. They've kept open the old (but just as indifferent) office under the arcade at the west end of Piazza San Marco at no. 71F, on the left of the tunnel-like street leading to Calle dell'Ascensione (tel. **041-529-8740** or 041-529-8711; fax 041-523-0399; vaporetto: San Marco). It's open Monday to Friday 9am to 3:30pm. During peak season, a small info booth with erratic hours operates in the arrivals hall at the Marco Polo Airport. The tourist office's LEO Bussola brochure is useful for museum hours and events, but their map only helps you find vaporetto lines and stops (it's well worth buying a street map at a news kiosk). More useful is the info-packed monthly *Un Ospite di Venezia* ([www.unospitedivenetia.it](http://www.unospitedivenetia.it)); most hotels have a handful of copies. Also keep an eye out for the ubiquitous posters around town with exhibit and concert schedules. The classical concerts held mostly in churches are touristy but fun and are advertised by an army of

costumed touts handing out leaflets on highly trafficked streets.

**Websites**-- The city's official tourist-board site is [www.turismovenetia.it](http://www.turismovenetia.it); the official site of the city government (also full of good resources) is [www.comune.venezia.it](http://www.comune.venezia.it). A couple of good privately maintained sites are **Meeting Venice** ([www.meetingvenice.it](http://www.meetingvenice.it)) and **Doge of Venice** ([www.doge.it](http://www.doge.it)).

### Getting There

#### By Plane

You can fly into Venice from North America via Rome or Milan with Alitalia or a number of other airlines, or by connecting through a major European city with European carriers. No-frills carrier **Ryanair** ([www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com)) flies direct from London much more cheaply than the major airlines, as does **easyJet** ([www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com)).

Flights land at the **Aeroporto Marco Polo**, 7km (4 1/3 miles) north of the city on the mainland (tel. **041-260-9260** or 041-260-9250; [www.veniceairport.it](http://www.veniceairport.it)). There are two bus alternatives: The special **ATVO airport shuttle bus** (tel. **041-541-5180** or 041-520-5530; [www.atvo.it](http://www.atvo.it)) connects with Piazzale Roma not far from Venice's Santa Lucia train station (and the closest point to Venice's attractions accessible by land). Buses leave for/from the airport about every hour, cost 3€ (\$3.90), and make the trip in about 20 minutes. The slightly less expensive, twice-hourly local public **ACTV bus no. 5** (tel. **041-541-5180**) costs 1.50€ (\$1.95) and takes 30 to 45 minutes. Buy tickets for either at the newsstand just inside the terminal from the signposted bus stop. With either bus, you'll have to walk to/from the final stop at Piazzale Roma to the nearby **vaporetto** (water bus) stop for the final connection to your hotel. It's rare to see porters around who'll help with luggage, so pack light.

A **land taxi** from the airport to the Piazzale Roma (where you get the vaporetto) will run about 30€ (\$39).

The most fashionable and traditional way to arrive in Piazza San Marco is by sea. For 12€ (\$16), the **Cooperative San Marco/Alilaguna** (tel. **041-523-5775**; [www.alilaguna.it](http://www.alilaguna.it)) operates a

## Venice Snapshot continued

largemotoscafo(shuttle boat) service from the airport with two stops at Murano and the Lido before arriving after about 1 hour in Piazza San Marco. Call for the daily schedule of a dozen or so trips from about 6am to midnight; the schedule changes with the season and is coordinated with the principal arrival/departure of the major airlines(most hotels have the schedule). If your hotel isn't in the Piazza San Marco area, you'll have to make a connection at the vaporetto launches(your hotel can help you with the specifics if you booked before you left home).

A **private water taxi**(20-30 min. to/from the airport) is convenient but costly-- a legal minimum of 55€(\$72), but usually closer to 75€(\$98), for two to four passengers with few bags. It's worth considering if you're pressed for time, have an early flight, are carrying a lot of luggage(a Venice no-no), or can split the cost with a friend or two. It may be able to drop you off at the front(or side) door of your hotel or as close as it can maneuver given your hotel's location(check with the hotel before arriving). Your taxi captain should be able to tell you before boarding just how close he can get you. Try the **Corsorzio Motoscafi Venezia**(tel. **041-522-2303**; [www.motoscafivenezia.it](http://www.motoscafivenezia.it)) water taxis.

### By Train

Trains from Rome(4 1/2-7 hr.), Milan(2 1/2-3 1/2 hr.), Florence(3 hr.), and all over Europe arrive at the **Stazione Venezia-Santa Lucia**(tel. **848-888-088** or **147-888-088** toll-free from anywhere in Italy;<http://trenitalia.com>). To get there, all must pass through(though not necessarily stop at) a station marked Venezia-Mestre. Don't be confused: Mestre is a charmless industrial city that's the last stop on the mainland. Occasionally trains end in Mestre, in which case you have to catch

one of the frequent 10-minute shuttles connecting with Venice; it's inconvenient, so when you book your ticket, confirm that the final destination is Venezia-Stazione Santa Lucia.

Between the station's large front doors is a small, understaffed **tourist office**(tel. **041-529-8727** or **041-529-8740**), with lines that can be discouraging and a strict"one person allowed in at a time" policy. It's open daily 8am to 7pm(closed Sun in winter). The railway info office, marked with a lowercase*i*, is also in the station's main hall, staffed daily from 8am to 8pm.

On exiting, you'll find the Grand Canal immediately in front of you, a sight that makes for a heart-stopping first impression. You'll find the docks for a number of vaporetto lines(the city's public ferries or"water buses") to your left and right. Head to the booths to your left, near the bridge, to catch either of the two lines plying the Canal Grande: the no. 82 express, which stops only at the station, S. Marcuola, Rialto Bridge, S. Tomà, S. Samuele, and Accademia before hitting San Marco(26 min. total); and the misnamed no. 1 accelerato, which is actually the local, making 14 stops between the station and San Marco(a 31-min. trip). Both leave every 10 minutes or so, but every other no. 82 stops short at Rialto, meaning you'll have to disembark and hop on the next no. 1 or 82 that comes along to continue to San Marco.

**Note:** The no. 82 goes in two directions from the train station: left down the Canal Grande toward San Marco-- which is the(relatively) fast and scenic way-- and right, which also eventually gets you to San Marco(at the San Zaccaria stop) but takes more than twice as long because it goes the long way around Dorsoduro(and serves mainly commuters). Make sure the no. 82 you get on is headed to San Marco.

### By Bus

Though rail travel is more convenient and commonplace, Venice is serviced by long-distance buses from all over mainland Italy and some international cities. The final destination is Piazzale Roma, where you'll need to pick up vaporetto no. 82 or no. 1(as described under"By Train") to connect you with stops in the heart of Venice and along the Grand Canal.

### By Car

The only wheels you'll see in Venice are those attached to luggage. Venice is a city of canals and narrow alleys. **No cars are allowed**-- even the police and ambulance services use boats. Arriving in Venice by car is problematic and expensive-- and downright exasperating if it's high season and the parking facilities are full(they often are). You can drive across the Ponte della Libertà from Mestre to Venice, but you can go no farther than Piazzale Roma at the Venice end, where many garages eagerly await your euro. Do some research before choosing a garage-- the rates vary widely, from 21€(\$27) per day for an average-size car at the communal **ASM garage**(tel. **041-272-7301**; [www.asmvenezia.it](http://www.asmvenezia.it)) to 26€(\$34) per day at private outfits like **Garage San Marco**(tel. **041-523-2213**; [www.garagesanmarco.it](http://www.garagesanmarco.it)), in Piazzale Roma. If you have reservations at a hotel, check before arriving: Most of them offer discount coupons for some of the parking facilities; just ask the hotel in which garage you need to park and pay for parking upon leaving the garage.

Vaporetto line nos. 1 and 82, described under"By Train," above, both stop at Piazzale Roma before continuing down the Canal Grande to the train station and, eventually, Piazza San Marco.

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