

VENICE

ENCOUNTER

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Colour-Coding & Maps

Colour-coding is used for symbols on maps and in the text that they relate to (eg all eating venues on the maps and in the text are given a green knife and fork symbol). Each *sestiere* (neighbourhood) also gets its own colour, and this is used down the edge of the page and throughout that neighbourhood section.

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ALISON BING

When not scribbling notes in church pews and methodically eating her way across Venice, Alison contributes to Lonely Planet's *Italy*, *Milan* and *Tuscany & Umbria* guides, as well as architecture, food and art glossies such as *Architectural Record*, *Cooking Light* and *Italy's Flash Art*. Currently she divides her time between San Francisco and a hilltop town on the border of Lazio and Tuscany with partner (and fellow Slow Food member) Marco Flavio Marinucci. Alison holds a bachelor's degree in art history and a masters degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, a joint program between Tufts and Harvard Universities, but she regularly undermines these perfectly respectable diplomatic credentials with opinionated culture commentary for newspapers, magazines and radio.



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This book is dedicated to *voàltri venexiani*, who keep the city and its spirits afloat.

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Cover photograph Venice, San Giorgio Maggiore, Gondola and Bacino San Marco, Basilica by Andrea Palladio architect.

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Bow to the inevitable and take a gorgeous gondola ride (p175)

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THIS IS VENICE

As you approach the portals of the Basilica di San Marco, you feel a buzz surge through the crowd. A moment ago, you were a motley group of tourists, art students and the occasional nun – now you're ensemble players in the epic drama that is Venice.

Yet Venice isn't a one-stage venue. The dazzling pageantry continues at I Frari, Gallerie dell'Accademia, Scuola Grande di San Rocco and, of course, Teatro La Fenice. And if you think your walk-on part at these attractions is exhilarating, wait until you step backstage – which is never more than a *so-toportego* (passageway) away. In narrow *calli* (streets) off the thoroughfares to San Marco, you'll glimpse the behind-the-scenes creativity that keeps the whole production afloat: artisans at work in their studios, cooks whipping up four-star *cicheti* (Venetian tapas) on single-burner hotplates, musicians lugging 18th-century cellos to chamber-music practice. Here the volume is turned down, and you can hear the muffled sounds of intermission – neighbours kissing hello and Veronese spaniels trotting over footbridges.

But haven't Venetians heard their city is sinking? Absolutely – and true to form, they're staging a creative comeback. Venice has already survived plague, invasion and floods; under threat of imminent destruction, Venetians painted masterpieces, invented new architecture styles and created new musical genres. But rising tides are one thing, cruise ships are another. Millions of visitors annually disembark with just three hours to tour Venice, and if each day tripper asked one local for directions to San Marco, every Venetian would hear the question repeated 333 times a year.

This is where you come in. With your excellent map and insider info, ask questions Venetians actually enjoy answering. What's the best Venetian dish? How about those Venice Film Festival winners? And the most revealing question of all: what's new? Already there are new twists on baroque music, new galleries in ancient warehouses and new hotels in Palladian cloisters. Your timing is perfect – Venice's next act is just beginning.

Top left Gain a new perspective on the Campanile di San Marco (p44) **Top right** Wooden, me? Try to outstare the mannequins at Fiorella Gallery (p49) **Bottom** Gondolas? Check. Stripy shirt? Check. It must be Venice.