

## ENTERTAINMENT

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# ENTERTAINMENT

When the siren sounds for *acqua alta* (high tide), Venetians dutifully close up shop and head home to put up their flood barriers – then pull on their boots and head right back out again. Why let floods disrupt your evening's entertainment? Archival photos from Venice's 1966 deluge show a gondola pulled right up to a bar, and the bartender casually serving the gondolier a drink in hip-high water. It's not just a turn of phrase: come hell or high water, Venetians will find a way to have a good time.

Visitors who stay to see the city unwind after a long day of entertaining day trippers get to know the Venice behind the masquerade mask. At concerts and lounge clubs, you'll see Venice hit its groove as a cellist digs deep for a Vivaldi grace note or a DJ scratches out a swaggering hip hop–Fellini mix. To really blend in and *Venexianàrse* (make yourself Venetian), pick up some Venetian dialect, cookery or painting skills in a short course. For feats of athletic prowess, try rowing standing up (*voga alla veneta*), or exercise your vocal chords cheering on the local football team (they need all the help they can get).

To consider all your evening options, check out the Shows & Events insert in the tourist office's bimonthly *La Rivista di Venezia*, the monthly *VeNews* at news-stands and the free *VDV (Venezia da Vivere)* distributed randomly around the city and online. In winter many places close up earlier than in summer when the city's late-night venues, beach clubs and jammed events calendar make good on playwright and librettist Goldoni's famous Venetian boast: '*Semo a Venessia, sala! No ghe nasse gnente, e ghe xe de tutto; e a tutte le ore, e in t'un bater d'occio se trova tutto quel che se vol.*' (We're in Venice, you know! Nothing grows here, yet here there's everything, and at all hours, in the blink of an eye, you can find everything you want.)

## DRINKING

No rules seem to apply to drinking in Venice. Happy hour from 6pm to 7pm? More like twice daily, from 11am to 3pm and 6.30pm to 8.30pm – plus a bonus round at 8am for hardworking fishermen. No mixing spirits and wine? Venice's classic cocktails suggest otherwise, including *spritz* made with *prosecco*, soda water and bittersweet Aperol or bitter Campari. No girly drinks? Tell that to burly boat-builders enjoying a frothy *prosecco*.

This makes knowing what to order where a little tricky. Price isn't an indicator of quality – you can pay €2 for a respectable *spritz*, or live to regret that €15 Bellini (ouch). If you're not pleased with your drink, leave it and move on to the next *bacaro* (old-style bar). Venice is too small and life too short to make do with ho-hum hooch. Most *osterie* (pub-restaurants) and *enoteche* (wine bars) sell good stuff by the glass or half bottle, so you can discover new favourites without committing to a bottle. Even budding oenologists should solicit suggestions from bartenders, who accept the challenge of finding your new favourite Venetian tittle as a point of local pride. Don't be shy about asking fellow drinkers what they recommend, either; happy hour is highly sociable in Venice. *Cin-cin!* (Bottoms up!)

## Where to Drink

For a proper Venetian *giro d'ombra* (roving happy hour), start at 6.30pm at boozing hot spots clustered around the Rialto Market area, Campo Santa Margherita in Dorsoduro, Campo Zanipolo and Campo Maria Formosa in Castello and Fondamenta degli Ormesini in Cannaregio. If you're prompt, you might beat the crowds to the bar for fine Veneto wines for as little as €1.50 and get *cicheti* (snacks) while they're fresh.

For a selection of *osterie* and *enoteche* renowned for their food as well as their drink, check out [p178](#). To line your stomach with coffee, pastry and pasta before you pour on the wine, check out the cafe-bars in this chapter, and skip cappuccino for a stronger, local-favourite espresso drink: *macchiatone* (espresso with a 'big stain' of hot milk). The historic baroque cafes ringing Piazza San Marco serve coffee and hot chocolate with live orchestras, which might help your heart rediscover its rhythm once you get the bill. But this is Venice, and a little decadence is always in order.

## Opening Hours

Bars (in the Italian sense, ie coffee-and-sandwich places) and cafes generally open from 7.30am to 8pm, although some stay open after