

# INTRODUCING VENICE



*A fleet of gondoliers, among others, navigates the riches of the Grand Canal (p125)*

From the look of it, you'd think Venice spent all its time primping. Bask in the glory of Grand Canal palaces, but make no mistake: this city's a powerhouse.

You may have heard that Venice is an engineering marvel, with marble cathedrals built atop ancient posts driven deep into the *barene* (mud banks) – but the truth is that this city is built on sheer nerve. Reasonable people might blanch at water approaching their doorsteps and flee at the first sign of *acqua alta* (high tide). But reason can't compare to Venetian resolve. Instead of bailing out, Venetians have flooded the world with voluptuous Venetian-red paintings and wines, music, Marco Polo spice-route flavours, and bohemian-chic fashion. And they're not done yet.

## VENICE LIFE

With the world's most artistic masterpieces per square kilometre, you'd think the city would take it easy, maybe rest on its laurels. But Venice refuses to retire from the inspiration business. In narrow *calli* (alleyways), you'll glimpse artisans hammering out shoes crested like lagoon birds, cooks whipping up four-star dishes on single-burner hotplates, and musicians lugging 18th-century cellos to riveting baroque concerts played with punk-rock bravado. As you can see, all those 19th-century Romantics got it wrong. Venice is not destined for genteel decay. Billionaire benefactors and cutting-edge biennales are filling up those ancient *palazzi* (palaces) with restored masterpieces and eyebrow-raising contemporary art and architecture, and back-alley galleries and artisan showrooms are springing up in their shadows. Your timing couldn't be better: the people who made walking on water look easy are already well into their next act.

But don't go expecting to have the city to yourself. Even in the foot-stomping chill of January, Venice has its admirers. The upside is that you'll keep fascinating company here. More accessible than ever and surprisingly affordable given its singularity, Venice remains a self-selecting city: it takes a certain imagination to forgo the convenience of cars and highways for slow boats and crooked *calli*. Sculptors, harpsichordists, sushi chefs and dreamers passing as accountants might end up bumping elbows over heaping plates of *risotto di seppie* (squid risotto) along scuffed wooden tables in authentic *osterie* (pub-restaurants). Judging by the crowd, you might think the Art Biennale must be happening – but no, that's just an average Wednesday night in Venice. Venice is best when caught between acts, after the day trippers rush off to beat afternoon traffic, and before cruise ships dump dazed newcomers off in Piazza San Marco with three hours to see all of Venice before lunch. Those visitors may never get to see Venice in its precious downtime, when gondoliers warm up their vocal chords with scorching espresso on their way to work, and mosaic artisans converge at the bar for tesseræ shoptalk over a *spritz* (prosecco-based drink).

Neither rain nor high tides can dampen high spirits at Venice's twice-daily happy hours, when even the most orthodox fashionistas will gamely pull on *stivali di gomma* (rubber boots) over their stylish artisan-made shoes, and slosh out to the bar to get first dibs on *cicheti* (traditional bar snacks). How come 'happy hour' lasts five hours a day, and why not close at the first high tide signal? 'There's only one Venice', explains one host as he pours another glass of fizzy Veneto *prosecco* well past the mark for *un ombra* (half-glass). 'We might as well enjoy it.'

If you ever did have Venice to yourself, you'd soon be hopelessly lost. When streets suddenly dead-end into canals or you wind up on a ferry with the right number heading in entirely the wrong direction, Venice can seem like a very tricky live-action video game, and you're the hapless character lost in the maze. Once you've found someone who knows the way and points you toward the correct dock, that's it: you've passed your Venice initiation. But do Venetians a favour and consult the signs, your map or a fellow traveller first. If each day tripper asked one local for directions to San Marco, every Venetian would hear the question repeated some 333 times a year. Venetians enjoy searching questions – but try asking something that stirs Venetian passions. What's freshest right now at the Rialto markets, and how should it be cooked? Who should win the Golden Lion at this year's Venice Film Festival? Any thoughts about feeding pigeons in Piazza San Marco?

The most sensitive local subject is still Mose (Modulo Sperimentale Elettromeccanico), the controversial flood barrier system currently under construction. But the combined effects of industrial pollution and global warming are also taken very seriously in this fragile lagoon ecosystem, and any effort you make to help mitigate the impact of travel – stay longer, eat and drink local specialties, support local artisans, tidy up after yourself – makes you a most welcome guest.



Sweeping view of the lagoon city

# THE AUTHOR

## Alison Bing



When she's not scribbling notes in church pews or methodically eating her way across Venice's *sestieri* (neighbourhoods), Alison contributes to Lonely Planet's *Venice, USA, San Francisco* and *Tuscany & Umbria* guides, as

well as architecture, food, and art glossies including *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 her partner Marco Flavio Marinucci. Alison holds a bachelor's degree in art history and a master's degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, a joint program of Tufts and Harvard Universities – perfectly respectable diplomatic credentials she regularly undermines with opinionated culture commentary for newspapers, magazines, TV and radio.

### ALISON'S TOP VENICE DAY

The Venetian *bea vita* (beautiful life) begins with cappuccino overlooking the Piazza San Marco in the company of griffins at the frescoed cafe of the Museo Correr (p69), then cross

the square to join the crowds in a collective gasp under the gold domes of the Basilica di San Marco (p65). Afterwards, I brave the gauntlet of boutiques lining the route from the Piazza to the Ponte dell'Accademia – but I can't resist stops at Galleria Rosella Junck and Caterina Tognon Arte Contemporanea to see the latest contemporary art sensations (see p74). The Punta della Dogana (p81) is the next logical stop on a contemporary art binge, to see the latest rotation from François Pinault's collection installed in the fluid gallery spaces Tadao Ando created in Venice's ancient waterfront customs warehouses. From here, it's a leisurely wander up the sunny Zattere and Calle Lunga San Barnaba to a long lunch of Venetian seafood classics at Ristoteca Oniga (p183) and a coffee among artists, fishmongers and arguing philosophy students at Il Caffè Rosso (p201) in Campo Santa Margherita. My old friends Rosalba Carriera and Pietro Longhi greet me with a wink from the walls at Ca' Rezzonico (p80), but I can't stay long: I have a standing date with a red-hot Titian at I Frari (p84), and VizioVirtù (p168) balsamic vinegar chocolates on the way. I take the long way to happy hour at the Rialto via Santa Croce studios to see the newest handmade wonders, and wind up dragging artisans along the Grand Canal for drinks at Al Mercà (p202). Crossing the Rialto as the sun sets, I arrive in time for the last boar-salami *crostini* (sandwich) and a stunning Amarone at I Rusteghi (p182), then hustle off to my Interpreti Veneziani concert (p209). Humming Vivaldi, I return to face the dimly glimmering Basilica di San Marco, and say the word that bears repeating in Venice: *unbelievable*.

### LONELY PLANET AUTHORS

Why is our travel information the best in the world? It's simple: our authors are passionate, dedicated travellers. They don't take freebies in exchange for positive coverage so you can be sure the advice you're given is impartial. They travel widely to all the popular spots, and off the beaten track. They don't research using just the internet or phone. They discover new places not included in any other guidebook. They personally visit thousands of hotels, restaurants, palaces, trails, galleries, temples and more. They speak with dozens of locals every day to make sure you get the kind of insider knowledge only a local could tell you. They take pride in getting all the details right, and in telling it how it is. Think you can do it? Find out how at [lonelyplanet.com](http://lonelyplanet.com).

# GETTING STARTED

Nothing can really prepare you for your first glimpse of Venice, its marble palaces rising above the teal-blue lagoon like a wildly ambitious desert mirage – but for the rest of your Venice vacation, preparations come in handy. To see why the world tends to show up whenever Venice has thrown a party for the past five centuries, plan your visit to coincide with a highlight from Venice's calendar of festivals and events (see [opposite](#)), and be sure to book accommodation ahead (see [p214](#)). With some advance planning (see [below](#)), you can arrive with tickets in hand for opera at La Fenice, skip the queues for museum and event tickets, and slide right into reserved seats at the restaurant of your choice.

While you might come to Venice prepared to splurge on once-in-a-lifetime adventures, you'll also find opportunities to see Venice at its best for far less than you'd expect (see [p21](#)). To plan a dream getaway to match your budget, see [p20](#) for average costs and money-saving tips. With fairy-tale charms and year-round attractions, this lagoon wonderland attracts plenty of visitors – but by keeping a few tips in mind for sustainable travel (see [p21](#)), you can distinguish yourself as a most welcome guest.

## WHEN TO GO

Travellers looking for elbow room for sketching in the Gallerie dell'Accademia, casual conversation with Venetians and spontaneous weekend dinners without reservations would be better off going in Venice's quieter months of October through March. But even solitary types will find that some Venetian experiences are better in a crowd: happy hours, thunderous encores at La Fenice, and the chorus of 'ooh!' as crowds pass through the portals of Basilica di San Marco to glimpse shimmering gold mosaic domes overhead. For a balance of quiet moments and collective euphoria,

stay at least overnight in Venice, so you can see what the city is like after the crowd thins out and the moon rises, and in the morning when the town throws back an espresso and starts the show all over again.

You'll probably pay a premium for the privilege of being in town for masquerade balls during Carnevale, gala art openings for the Biennale, or star-studded premieres at the Venice International Film Festival. But this city has been internationally famed (and notorious) for its party-throwing prowess since the 16th century, and you can see why at any of the city's major shindigs – see [Festivals](#), [opposite](#), and the list of official holidays, [p267](#).

## ADVANCE PLANNING

### Well Ahead

Before you book your train or plane to Venice, browse Venice accommodation options ([p214](#)) online: you'll be surprised how much you can save by going midweek or just before a holiday, and you'll get prime choices in B&Bs and rental apartments if you plan ahead. For major events like the Biennale or Carnevale, you can often book discounted advance tickets online through Venice Tourism Board's [VeniceConnected](#) ([www.veniceconnected.com](http://www.veniceconnected.com)) or special passes through [Hello Venezia](#) ([www.hellovenezia.com](http://www.hellovenezia.com)). You can also buy La Fenice opera tickets online at [www.teatrolafenice.it](http://www.teatrolafenice.it) ([p210](#)).

### One Week Ahead

Skip the queues for popular attractions by purchasing tickets online through the [Venice Tourism Board](#) ([www.turismo.venezia.it](http://www.turismo.venezia.it)) or last-minute tickets at [www.weekendavenezia.com](http://www.weekendavenezia.com) (see [p266](#)). If you're planning a dinner out during a holiday, Carnevale or Venice International Film Festival, now would be a good time to book a table.

### One or Two Days Ahead

Check special event calendars at [www.aguestinvenice.com](http://www.aguestinvenice.com) and [www.veneziadavivere.com](http://www.veneziadavivere.com), and plan an evening around a concert by Venice Jazz Club, Interpreti Veneziani, Musica a Palazzo, or other local music groups (see [p208](#)).



Since Venice is gorgeous inside and out, bad weather doesn't have to scuttle your travel plans. The only thing more splendid than your first glimpse of Venice may be the sight of Venice reflected in a puddle – or on very rare occasions, Venice's Gothic arches and gondola prows poking through a white blanket of snow. Bone-chilling weather in January and February can bring crystalline blue skies ideal for photo ops and gooey hot cocoa in Piazza San Marco. The heaviest rains fall from December through March, but you might luck into a freak summer thunderstorm – after you see lightning strikes over the lagoon, you'll have a whole new appreciation of Tintoretto brushstrokes and the thunderous summer movement of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*. July and August tend to be hot and muggy, but if you get uncomfortable, make like a Venetian on vacation and escape to Lido beaches (see p116) or the Riviera Brenta (p231).

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Three rules for revellers are posted in major vaporetto stops: no littering in the canals, no defacing historic buildings, and no strutting about bare-breasted. The fact that Venice feels obliged to post that last regulation shows that opportunities for, erm, self-expression don't begin and end with Carnevale.

Whether you like to spend your downtime getting arty, sweaty, mystical, or all of the above, Venice has you covered with Biennales, marathons, and weddings to the sea. The busiest months for traditional festivities are May through September; find out more about many of Venice's upcoming events at [Cultura & Spettacolo](http://Cultura & Spettacolo) ([www.culturaspettacolovenezia.it](http://www.culturaspettacolovenezia.it), in Italian). Fair warning: this town seems determined to see you dunked. Many festivals entail crossing makeshift pontoon bridges or rowing while standing up, and boozing canalside has obvious risks.

### January

#### REGATA DELLA BEFANA

Witches in Venice don't ride brooms: they row boats, as you can see in this regatta featuring a fleet of brawny male rowers cross-dressed as *befane* (witches). According to Italian legend, La Befana is the good witch who accompanied the three wise men to deliver gifts to baby Jesus, bringing sweets to children along the way. Traditionally, on Epiphany (6 January), La Befana

## top picks

### WAYS TO CELEBRATE CARNEVALE

- Slide tackle in knee britches at Calcio Storico, the fancy-dress football match in Piazza San Marco.
- Binge on *fritelle veneziane*, the rum-and-raisin doughnuts best eaten when still warm, morning, noon, and night.
- Quadrille the night away at La Fenice's Masked Ball on the second Saturday of Carnevale (tickets start at €200; costume and dance classes not included).
- Grab a spot canalside for the Grand Canal flotilla, where the parade floats actually float.
- Have a historically accurate blast, or DIY trying – make your own mask at *Ca' Macana* (p167) or master the art of mask acting at *Teatro Junghans* (p210).

brings sweets to good children and coal for naughty ones. This was once Italy's main gift-giving event, until Babbo Natale (Father Christmas) stole La Befana's thunder. But on Epiphany in Venice, La Befana still has the honour of kicking off the first of more than 100 annual regattas on the lagoon.

### February

#### CARNEVALE

[www.carnevale.venezia.it](http://www.carnevale.venezia.it)

Ten days and nights of masquerade madness – or until your liver twitches and wig itches – rage on in February before Lent begins on Ash Wednesday. Even Napoleon and Mussolini couldn't stop Venice's signature event, when masqueraders revel in the streets and occasionally stumble into canals wearing long-nosed plague masks and *com-media dell'arte* costumes. If you're feeling a tad hung over after a week or so, imagine how you would have felt in the 18th century, when the party lasted two months!

### March

#### SALONE NAUTICO DI VENEZIA

[www.festivaldelmare.com](http://www.festivaldelmare.com)

Since 2002 the Stazione Marittima (Ferry Terminal) has hosted the popular Venice International Boat Show, with regattas at Stazione Marittima and 100 historic vessels on display at the Arsenale.

# top picks

## FOR FIRST-TIME VISITORS

- **Basilica di San Marco (p65)** Experience the awe of ages under glittering gold mosaic domes.
- **Grand Canal (p125)** The world's grandest boulevard is a shimmering stretch of water lined with gleaming Venetian Gothic marble palaces.
- **Gallerie dell'Accademia (p76)** A multiplex of masterpieces, packed with action, romance, catastrophe, redemption and controversy.
- **I Frari (Chiesa di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari; p84)** This Gothic cathedral is lined with priceless art, but Titian's red-hot altarpiece gives it an otherworldly glow.
- **Scuola Grande di San Rocco (p85)** Lightning-strike streaks of paint illuminate floor-to-ceiling masterpieces by Venice's master of stormy drama, Tintoretto.

## April

### FESTA DI SAN MARCO

[www.comune.venezia.it](http://www.comune.venezia.it)

Join the celebration of Venice's patron saint on 25 April, when Venetian men carry a *bocolo* (rosebud) in processions through Piazza San Marco, then bestow them on the women they love.

## May

### VOGALONGA

[www.turismovenetia.it](http://www.turismovenetia.it)

Not a race so much as a show of endurance, this 32km 'long row' starts with the launch of 1000 boats in front of the Palazzo Ducale, loops past Burano and Murano, and ends with cheers, sweat and enormous blisters at Punta della Dogana.

### FESTA DELLA SENZA

[www.sevenonline.it/senza](http://www.sevenonline.it/senza)

Venice loves its lagoon so much, it has renewed its wedding vows to the water every year since 998. On the Feast of the Ascension on the second Sunday in May, the city gave Venice's fleet a grand send-off as it sailed off to reclaim Dalmatia in 998. The fleet returned triumphant, and ever since, the city has celebrated the Feast of the Ascension with the Spotalizio del Mar (Wedding with the Sea) ceremony, when the city's leader

(first the doge, now the mayor) tosses a gold ring in the waters near San Nicolò on the Lido. Got your scuba gear?

## PALIO DELLE QUATTRO ANTICHE REPUBBLICHE MARINARE

[www.comune.venezia.it](http://www.comune.venezia.it)

A glorious grudge match: the former maritime republics of Amalfi, Genoa, Pisa and Venice take turns hosting the historic Regatta of the Four Ancient Maritime Republics, when four galleons, crewed by eight oarsmen and one at the tiller, compete for maritime boating bragging rights. Costumed processions re-enact each republic's great naval victories, and honour the Palio winners. As any Venetian will be quick to point out, since the Palio's inception in 1954, Venice has won 30 matches to nine by Amalfi, six by Pisa, and eight by historic rival Genoa. The challenge will be held in Venice again in 2011.

## June

### VENEZIA SUONA

[www.veneziasuona.it](http://www.veneziasuona.it), in Italian

Hear medieval *campi* (squares) and baroque *palazzi* (palaces) echo with the latest sounds from around the world over a glorious June weekend. Most performances run from 4pm to 10pm.

### FESTA DI SAN PIETRO DI CASTELLO

[www.comune.venezia.it](http://www.comune.venezia.it)

The Festival of St Peter of Castello takes place during the last week of June, with music, revelry and food stalls at the steps of the church that was once the city's cathedral. The ancient festival begins with traditional religious veneration, and has all the hallmarks of a proper Italian *sagra* (feast): games for kids, hearty rustic fare, and Abba tribute bands.

### LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA

[www.labiennale.org](http://www.labiennale.org)

Venice's international showcase for the arts and architecture has been a show-stopper for a century. In odd-numbered years the Art Biennale usually runs from June to November, and in even years the Architecture Biennale kicks off in September – but every summer the Biennale features avant-garde dance, theatre, cinema and music. The Art Biennale is headquartered in permanent

pavilions in the [Giardini Pubblici \(p104\)](#), with special exhibitions at locations across Venice. In alternate years the Architecture Biennale is staged in the Arsenale, with occasional installations in other parts of the city. The Festival Internazionale di Danza Contemporanea (International Festival of Contemporary Dance) is held annually starting in mid-June, and runs for about six weeks.

## July

### FESTA DEL REDENTORE

[www.turismovenezia.it](http://www.turismovenezia.it)

Walk on water across the Canale della Giudecca to [Chiesa del SS Redentore \(p112\)](#) via a bobbing, wobbly pontoon bridge during the Feast of the Redeemer, the third weekend in July. Yet another regatta is held on the Grand Canal, but the real action is at the Redentore and on the Canale della Giudecca, where crowds picnic in boats and watch fireworks. Every year since 1577, Venice has commemorated its reprieve from the plague by crossing the pontoon bridge to give thanks at the church – a joyous and only occasionally soaking wet event.

### SUGGESTIVO

[www.culturaspettacolovenetia.it](http://www.culturaspettacolovenetia.it), in Italian

The annual summer fest seems to go by a different name every year, but live jazz, theatre and dance are recurring themes from Giudecca to mainland Mestre. The highlight is the Venice Jazz Festival, with jazz legends such as Wynton Marsalis and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra bringing down the house at La Fenice, and Italian stars like Paolo Conte playing Piazza San Marco with La Fenice's orchestra. Pick up programs from tourist offices; events often continue into September.

## August

### VENICE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

[www.labiennale.org/en/cinema](http://www.labiennale.org/en/cinema)

The only thing hotter than Lido beaches in August is the red carpet at this star-studded event, which runs from the last weekend in August through the first week of September at the Palazzo della Mostra del Cinema on the Lido. When the Venice Biennale Interna-

zionale d'Arte announced its first annual film showcase in 1932, the scandal threatened to sink Venice. 'What kind of a city would risk its reputation on popular entertainment?', sniffed Cannes, New York and Toronto. But once Greta Garbo, Joan Crawford, Clark Gable and 25,000 people showed up for screenings, the showcase and its 'Golden Lion' awards ceremony proved a winning formula of art and celebrity. Never an indie film showcase, the Venice International Film Festival often rewards directors who should have won Oscars on creative merit, including Darren Aronofsky (*The Wrestler*), Spike Jonze (*Being John Malkovich*), Antoine Fuqua (*Training Day*), and Ang Lee (*Brokeback Mountain*), as well as perennial favourites Woody Allen, Takeshi Kitano, Martin Scorsese and Zhang Yimou.

## September

### REGATA STORICA

[www.comune.venezia.it](http://www.comune.venezia.it)

Never mind who's winning, check out the fantastic gear: 16th-century costumes, eight-oared gondolas, and ceremonial barks all feature in a historical procession re-enacting the arrival of the Queen of Cyprus. On the first Sunday of the month, a floating parade is followed by a series of four races that start at Castello and proceed west up the Grand Canal to the former convent of Santa Chiara, where the boats turn around a *bricola* (pylon) and pound back down to the finishing line at Ca' Foscari. Kids, women and *gondolieri* take turns rowing fast and furiously for top honours at the *macchina*, the Historical Regatta's trophy stand.

### VENICE VIDEOART FAIR

[www.venicevideoartfair.org](http://www.venicevideoartfair.org)

Poetic, lovely and weird, Italy's premier video art fair features 25 booths of new-media art in the anachronistic island setting of [San Servolo \(p124\)](#), a ferry ride away from the Biennale gardens.

### SAGRA DEL PESCE

[www.comune.venezia.it](http://www.comune.venezia.it)

The sleepy island of [Burano \(p119\)](#) roars to life during September's annual Fish Festival, when crowds enjoy fish, polenta and white wine accompanied by traditional music. In the afternoon the city's only mixed men's and women's rowing regatta takes place off

the island – and since this is the last serious match of the regatta season, rowers go all out for a definitive win.

## October

### FESTA DEL MOSTO

[www.comune.venezia.it](http://www.comune.venezia.it)

A genuine country fair, held on an island. On Venice's 'garden isle' of **Sant'Erasmo** (p122), northeast of the city, the wine grape harvest is celebrated on the first Sunday in October with a parade of floats, farmers market, gourmet food stalls, live music, and wine.

### VENICE MARATHON

[www.venicemarathon.com](http://www.venicemarathon.com)

Six thousand runners work up a sweat over 42km of spectacular scenery, dashing along the River Brenta past Palladian villas before crossing into Venice and heading to Piazza San Marco via a 160m floating bridge. Mind your step...

## November

### FESTA DELLA MADONNA DELLA SALUTE

[www.turismovenezia.it](http://www.turismovenezia.it)

If you'd survived plague, floods and Austrian invasion, you'd throw a party too. Every 21 November since the 17th century, Venetians have crossed a pontoon bridge across the Grand Canal to give thanks at the **Chiesa di Santa Maria della Salute** (p81) and splurge on sweets.

## COSTS & MONEY

The splendours of Venice do not always come cheap – though when you consider that supplies have to be brought in by boats and lugged over footbridges, prices for basic food, drink and lodging can seem surprisingly reasonable. Rome and Milan often charge just as much or more, minus the Grand Canal views, stellar selection of Veneto wines, and lagoon-fresh seafood.

To reduce your entry fees, check out ticket prices on different days available online through the Venice Tourism Board's new **VeniceConnected** ([www.veniceconnected.com](http://www.veniceconnected.com)) service, which sells reduced-price advance combined or solo tickets for transportation, city museums and parking.

Accommodation, meals, transport and sight entry fees will be your main expenses. A basic double is hard to find for less than €80 a night, especially in high season. With some planning during the November to March low season, you might find a charming, central B&B for as little as €65, hostel bunks with frescoes or canal views for even less, or apartment rentals by the week starting at around €300. For midrange rates as low as €100 (in low season) or €160 in high season, you might score a room in a sleek boutique B&B or an actual palace.

A full sit-down meal (three courses, with dessert and house wine) quickly heads upwards of €25 to €30, but *cicheti* (Venetian snacks, or 'small plates') are a budget gourmet delight: under €10 gets you two to four orders of meatballs, *crostini* (open-face sandwiches) even seafood delicacies at the bar with a glass of wine. Most bars sell *panini* (sandwiches) and similar snacks costing €3 to €5, and pizza starts at about €2 a slice or €7 for a generous personal-sized pie. As is true across Italy, coffee and snacks at the bar are cheaper than at a table. Self-catering is another budget eating option; see p185.

It pays to stay longer in Venice when it comes to public transport, because tickets for unlimited travel for 24 to 72 hours are a much better deal than one-way tickets. For details, see the Transport chapter, p257.

The more you see, the less you pay per site with multivenue entry passes to Venice's museums and churches. For passes and combined entry tickets, see p266, and the individual venue listings.

Given these basic costs, a backpacker sticking religiously to youth hostels, walking rather than taking vaporetti (public ferries), enjoying meals of *cicheti*, *panini* and house wine, and making good use of museum and church passes, could get by on €50 to €60 per day. A midrange budget varies widely depending on food, lodging and season, ranging from €100 to €250 a day.

### HOW MUCH?

**Espresso coffee at the bar** €0.90 to €1

**Cicheti (Venetian bar snacks)** €1 to €4 each

**Chorus Pass (good for entry to 16 churches)** €9

**Hand-blown Murano glass ring** €10 to €30

**Handmade marble-paper travel journal** €15 to €25

**12-hour vaporetto ticket** €16

**Bicycle hire per day on the Lido** €10



## TOP 10 SIGNATURE SPLURGES & BEST BARGAINS

With some savvy and the plentiful options in this book, you can maximise your Venice experience and minimise the bill. Check out these signature Venice experiences, and best-value Venetian alternatives.

- **Splurge:** sip an authentic **Bellini** (*prosecco*-and-peach cocktail) where it was invented, at Harry's Bar (€15; **p199**). **Bargain:** toast the good life with a strong **spritz** (*prosecco*-and-bitters cocktail) for €1.50 to €3 at an authentic neighbourhood *osteria* (pub-restaurant) – see **p198** for options near you.
- **Splurge:** explore Venice and discover your own romantic side on a 40-minute **gondola ride** (€80, not including tip or extras, like singing; see also **p259**). **Bargain:** take the ultimate Venetian transit dare and stand up like a local on a €1 **traghetto** (commuter gondola) ride across the Grand Canal (see **p261**).
- **Splurge:** drift off under frescoed ceilings in a kingly antique bed at a 1540 palace, **Palazzo Abadessa** (double €145 to €325; **p222**). **Bargain:** drift off under 18th-century frescoes in a €22 dorm bed at **Foresteria Valdesse** (**p224**), a hostel housed in a 17th-century palace.
- **Splurge:** indulge in decadent dining at Michelin-starred **Met** (two courses €70-plus, not including wine; **p191**). **Bargain:** go all out with €10 to €20 for a five-star *cicheti* (bar snacks) feast at **All'Arco** (**p188**), including a glass or two of DOC Veneto wine.
- **Splurge:** score opening-night box seats to opera performances that raise the gilded roof at **Teatro La Fenice** (tickets €153; **p210**). **Bargain:** even on the day of performances, you may still be able to score €24 tickets to an **Interpreti Veneziani** concert at historic San Vidal (**p209**).
- **Splurge:** make a summer getaway to Lido beaches with a **private cabana** (€17 plus vaporetto transport; **p116**). **Bargain:** **lounge dockside** along the Zattere with Da Nico's *gianduiotto*, a slab of hazelnut *gelato* (ice cream) submerged under whipped cream (€8; **p184**).
- **Splurge:** purchase a highly collectable signed work by the world's leading glass artisans at **Murano Collezioni** (artworks €300-plus; **p119**). **Bargain:** score unsigned rings and beads by emerging Murano glass artisans for €7 to €15 from **Linea Arte Vetro** (**p175**).
- **Splurge:** linger over luxurious hot chocolate at **Caffè Florian** (hot chocolate €10, plus €6 music surcharge for outdoor seating in Piazza San Marco; **p199**). **Bargain:** sip €2 artisanal hot chocolate served hot and gooey from a chocolate fountain, at **VizioVirtù**, (**p168**).
- **Splurge:** reserve **prime-time tickets to Venice International Film Festival screenings** in the Lido's Palazzo della Mostra del Cinema (tickets €40; **p19**). **Bargain:** book **daytime Venice International Film Festival screenings** at the Lido's PalaBiennale (€8), behind the Palazzo della Mostra del Cinema.
- **Splurge:** soak your cares away with a milk, honey and rose bath in a Palladian landmark at eco-friendly **Bauer Palladio Hotel & Spa** (**p224**). **Bargain:** soak up the sun with a chilled €4 *prosecco* (sparkling white wine) in the Carlo Scarpa–designed garden at **Palazzo Querini-Stampalia** (**p105**).

## INTERNET RESOURCES

To find out what's on the calendar in Venice during your visit, drop by the APT tourism office (**p274**) to pick up this month's printed *Eventi* brochure, or click on the Calendar button at [www.comune.venezia.it](http://www.comune.venezia.it). As well as the obvious [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com), sites offering handy information, listings and deals include the following:

**A Guest in Venice** ([www.aguestinvenice.com](http://www.aguestinvenice.com)) Hotelier association provides information on upcoming exhibits, events, and lectures.

**Venezia da Vivere** (The Creative Guide to Contemporary Venice; [www.veneziadavivere.com](http://www.veneziadavivere.com)) The guide to what's hip and happening in Venice now: music performances, art openings, nightlife, new designers and more.

**Venice Explorer** (<http://venicexplorer.net>) Provides calendar listings and locator maps for Venice venues, bars and attractions.

**Venice Tourism Board** (Azienda Promozione Turistica di Venezia, or APT; [www.turismovenetia.it](http://www.turismovenetia.it)) Sells tickets to major city attractions online, covers upcoming cultural events and lists hundreds of B&Bs, hotels and other accommodation options.

**Weekend a Venezia** (<http://en.venezia.waf.it>) Offers discounted and last-minute tickets to major tourist attractions.

## SUSTAINABLE VENICE

Look up at Venice's towering church domes, grand Gothic archways and arching footbridges, then look at what's directly below: the teal waters of Venice's lagoon. With only 7.6 sq km of land punctuating 267km of sparkling lagoon waters and canals, this city is more water than land. But make no mistake: without Venetians' careful custodianship of this lagoon for over 1000 years, there would be no land left to support these landmarks.

Reclaiming those 7.6km from the lagoon was hard work. Venetians accomplished over several centuries, digging deeper channels in the shallow lagoon to drain the waters around tiny islands. To extend the islands, platforms were built of pine pylons rammed into the muddy lagoon floor topped by layers of Istrian stone. Over the centuries, the seawater gradually mineralised the wood and hardened the structure, while the upper stone layers remained impervious to the tides. On top of these ingenious platforms, Venetians built incredible monuments that have stood the test of time, including Baldassare Longhena's domed 1630 [Chiesa di Santa Maria della Salute](#) (p81), a spectacular domed structure supported by at least 100,000 pylons at the tip of Dorsoduro island.

You may have heard that Venice is sinking, but that's not entirely accurate. The city's wooden foundations have held up miraculously well, despite the rise and fall of tides and periodic flooding over centuries. But the foundations are taking a pounding as never before, with new stresses from industrial pollutants and the wakes of speeding motorboats. At the same time, the dredging of deeper channels to accommodate ferries, tankers and cruise ships has contributed to a doubling in water levels since 1900. Back then, Piazza San Marco flooded about 10 times a year; now it's closer to 60. Venice is trying to control the tides by building new mobile barriers at the edges of the lagoon, called Mose (see p36). But even if the Mose project can alleviate some flood conditions, other threats remain to the fragile lagoon ecosystem that keeps Venice afloat. Since the 1960s, Venetians have taken bold steps to reverse the toll on the lagoon from industrialisation, enforcing new rules around waste from the Porta Marghera chemical plants inland and new speed rules for boats.

But when it comes to shoring up complex environmental concerns, 90,000 Venetians can't reverse the tide of wear and tear on the

lagoon by themselves – which is where your help comes in handy. With 22 million visitors a year, even a minor adjustment in travel patterns can lighten the burden of upkeep for Venetians, and make a sea change in the life of the lagoon. You can be the next hero of Venice's story with a few thoughtful decisions:

**Take the train to Venice** Long-haul ferries and cruise ships have an outsized environmental impact on tiny Venice and its fragile lagoon aquaculture, exposing Venice's ancient foundations to degradation from high-speed *motoschiavi* (wakes) and leakage of wastewater from the bilge, ballast and flushing of on-board toilets. Sulphur emissions from cruise ships eat away the city's stonework, leaving lacy Gothic balconies to crumble as marble and stone turn to powder. Take the lower-impact train instead, and Venice will be most grateful – and within Italy, the train is more time- and cost-efficient, too.

**Stay overnight** Fewer than one-third of Venice's visitors stay the night and enjoy Venetian dinners, concerts, happy hours and hospitality. Venetians try not to take this personally, but it does put a strain on local–visitor relations and tax revenues for essential services like garbage collection and bridge maintenance. Your choice to stay for a night or more gives Venice a chance to show off its legendary hospitality, and lightens the burden for Venetians for all that upkeep.

**Go with the slow flow** Ask water-taxi drivers to go slower to avoid kicking up a wake to protect Venice's foundations, and gondoliers will sing your praises. If you take your sweet time getting around town on foot, you'll be more likely to discover Venetian artisans, *gelaterie* (ice-cream shops), and off-the-beaten-path *osterie* (pub-restaurants) that don't often benefit from tourism.

**Pick up and pack out trash** You'll be admired for recycling and tidying as you go through Venice – and when receptacles are scarce or full, pack out your trash.

**Ask for acqua del rubinetto (tap water)** Drinking tap water instead of bottled water helps spare the city the cost and effort of recycling some 20–60 million water bottles annually.

**Spend time and money in local businesses** You'll be assuring your Venetian hosts that all their effort to keep Venice afloat is worthwhile, and personally appreciated.



# GRAND CANAL

Sorry, Champs Élysées, you never stood a chance: in the 15th century, French writer Philippe de Commynes proclaimed the Grand Canal 'the finest street in the world, with the finest houses'. Comparing other boulevards to the Grand Canal seems unfair, given teal-blue water in place of asphalt and fleets of gondolas that make rush hour seem romantic.

The Grand Canal looms larger in the imagination than in reality: this stretch of water is only 40m to 100m wide, 3.8km long and about 6m deep. Yet, this backwards-S-shaped canal could cause architectural whiplash, with 185 monuments and 15 religious buildings purpose-built to reflect Venice's glory. Ships laden with treasure pulled up to the grand water gates of *fondachi* (trading houses), and visiting dignitaries alighted on Grand Canal piers suitably stunned by the grandiose Gothic *palazzi* (palaces).

Today you don't have to be a Greek sea captain or Turkish princess to navigate the Grand Canal, though the magnificent ride may make you feel like one. Public transport doesn't get more glamorous than the vaporetto 1 ride from the Piazzale Roma to San Marco. Along the leisurely 45-minute commute, you'll spot some 50 *palazzi*, six churches, four bridges, two open-air markets and other landmarks recognisable from scene-stealing cameos in four James Bond films.

*Cruising down the finest 'street' in the world, the Grand Canal*



# PONTE DI CALATRAVA TO CA' PESARO



*Hurtle through time along the Grand Canal, from a futuristic bridge past a 13th-century Turkish trading post and Wagner's Renaissance residence to a modern-art showcase.*



### 1 Ponte di Calatrava

The Grand Canal starts with controversy: Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava's 2008 luminous glass-and-steel bridge (p97) gracing gritty Piazzale Roma. With costs triple the original €4 million estimates, work to correct a 4cm tolerance, and wheelchair accessibility concerns, some Venetians are grudging in their admiration.

### 2 Stazione di Santa Lucia

The first trains rumbled from the mainland into Venice in 1846, and a convent dedicated to Santa Lucia was demolished to make way for this train station, built in 1865.

### 3 Ponte dei Scalzi

Eugenio Miozzi's 1934 Istrian stone-and-iron bridge (p150) connects the train station with the south-western half of the city.

### 4 Fondaco dei Turchi

The former Turkish trading centre (p90) features a polychrome marble double colonnade with 13th-century capitals. The watchtowers are mostly decorative: though Venice pillaged Constantinople and Turks and Venetians skirmished at sea, trade triumphed over tension within Venice.

### 5 Deposito del Megio

Before its conversion into a school in 1922, this silo stored millet for famines and sieges, and saved the city in 1559. Gracing the edifice is Venice's lion of St Mark, a copy of an original chipped off by Napoleon.

### 6 Palazzo Vendramin-Calergi

Though Mauro Cordussi's Renaissance palace now houses the city's casino (p208), it wasn't exactly lucky for composer Richard Wagner, who retreated here with his family in 1882–83 only to drop dead on the premises.

### 7 Chiesa di San Stae

Built in 1709 on the site of an older church, this statue-bedecked white church (p91) keeps a straight Palladian face while winking at baroque ornament with its tiered statuary.

### 8 Ca' Pesaro

With a grand double arcade atop a faceted marble base, this *palazzo* (p88), completed in 1710, houses the Galleria d'Arte Moderna and Museo d'Arte Orientale.



THIS IMAGE  
IS NOT AVAILABLE  
DUE TO  
COPYRIGHT  
RESTRICTIONS



# CA' D'ORO TO CA' FOSCARI

Explore a sensational stretch of water between two Gothic palaces, passing open-air markets, the Rialto bridge, mansions inhabited by monkeys and heretics, and a town hall that makes bureaucracy look beautiful.



THIS IMAGE  
IS NOT AVAILABLE  
DUE TO  
COPYRIGHT  
RESTRICTIONS

2

### 1 Ca' d'Oro

The gilding is long gone from the facade of the 'Golden House' (p96), but the majesty of this 1430 Venetian-Gothic marvel remains. Two tiers of lacy arcades feature peekaboo quatrefoil port-holes, crowned by rooftop crenellation that looks like a tiara.

### 2 Pescaria

Before you see it coming on your right, you'll probably hear this fish market (p85), built in 1907 on the site where fishmongers have sung the praises of lagoon seafood for 700 years.

### 3 Rialto markets

At the neighbouring produce market (p85), Venetian vendors brag shamelessly about local seasonal produce.

### 4 Fondaco dei Tedeschi

Today a post office, this *fondaco* (p74), once the most important trading house on the canal, used to house German traders. Of the Titian and Giorgione frescoes that once covered the exterior, only a few faded fragments remain, displayed at the Ca' d'Oro (p96).

### 5 Ponte di Rialto

Tourists hang off this bridge (p87) like gargoyles to snap photos of Antonio da Ponte's 1592 engineering marvel. Though final construction costs spiralled to 250,000 Venetian ducats – some €19 million today – this marble arc has a glow rivaling gold around sunset.

### 6 Ca' Farsetti & Palazzo Loredan

Before becoming Venice's city hall in 1826, Ca' Farsetti (p139) served as a noble family residence, an art school where Canova studied and a hotel. Neighbouring Palazzo Loredan makes bureaucracy seem elegant, with city offices behind a 13th-century portico and 1st-floor loggia.

### 7 Palazzi Mocenigo

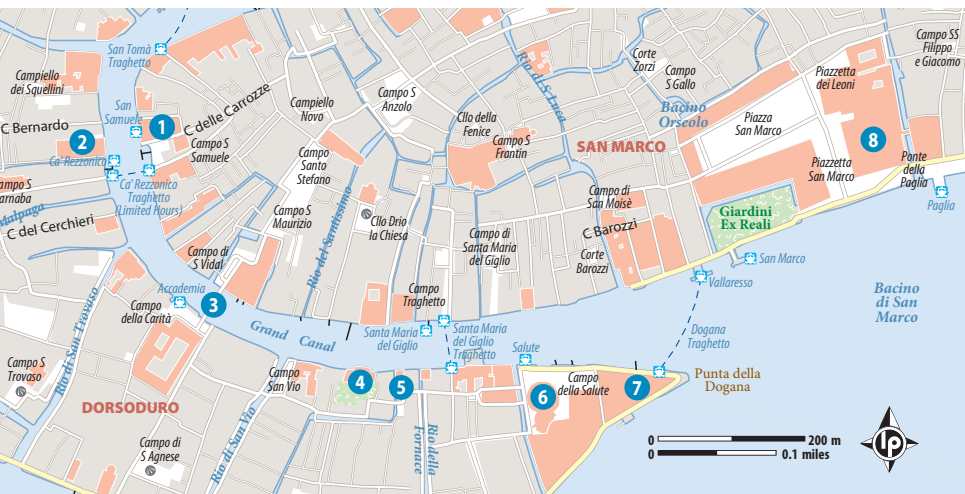
This Gothic complex (p89) today houses luxury holiday apartments, but it used to host more controversial guests: Thomas Moore sojourned here, philosopher Giordano Bruno retreated here after accusations of heresy, and Byron occupied one house with his two monkeys and 14 servants.

### 8 Ca' Foscari

Turn right to spot the quatrefoil arcades of Doge Francesco Foscari's 15th-century Gothic mansion, converted into a trade school in 1866 and restored in 2006 as the seat of Venice's Foscari University, famed for (fittingly) its architecture program.

# PALAZZO GRASSI TO PRIGIONI NUOVE

The grand finale of this canal is packed with more drama than a La Fenice opera: modern art attacks, prowling lions, stark nakedness, terrifying curses, black plague and a pink prison.



THIS IMAGE  
IS NOT AVAILABLE  
DUE TO  
COPYRIGHT  
RESTRICTIONS

4





### 1 Palazzo Grassi

Expect the unexpected at 18th-century Palazzo Grassi (p71): a car painted by Richard Prince, or a skull sculpted by Subodh Gupta from cooking pots. With ingenious exhibition design by Japanese minimalist Tadao Ando, this museum features blockbuster shows and François Pinault's contemporary art collection.

### 2 Ca' Rezzonico

Baldassare Longhena's jewel-box palace (p80) was once used for official ceremonies, and now houses Venice's baroque art treasures. Through its see-and-be-seen windows, you might catch a glimpse of heavenly Tiepolo ceilings.

### 3 Ponte dell'Accademia

Built in the 1930s as a temporary replacement for a 19th-century metal bridge, this wooden bridge (p70) arched like a cat's back is an enduring novelty. At the foot of the bridge is the Gallerie dell'Accademia (p76).

### 4 Palazzo Venier dei Leoni

Stone lions and Calder sculpture flank this *palazzo*, home to the Peggy Guggenheim Collection (p78). Between the lions, Marino Marini's 1948 naked bronze *Angel of the City* on horseback is evidently excited by his view of the Grand Canal.

### 5 Ca' Dario

This 1487 *palazzo* (p82) fascinated Monet, but dark superstitions linger behind this multi-coloured marble facade. According to Venetian urban legends, anyone who lives here is cursed with a terrible death, which local gossips claim dissuaded Woody Allen from buying the place.

### 6 Chiesa di Santa Maria della Salute

Baldassare Longhena's octagonal domed church (p81) gives thanks to the Madonna for sparing Venice from the plague; it's propped up by 100,000 wood pylons underfoot.

### 7 Punta della Dogana

The tip of Dorsoduro is the Punta della Dogana (p81), a historic customs warehouse reimaged by Tadao Ando as a public showcase for François Pinault's contemporary art collection.

### 8 Palazzo Ducale

The Grand Canal's grand finale is this pink Gothic *palazzo* (p66) and its Ponte dei Sospiri (Bridge of Sighs) leading the condemned to prison. Recently, preservationists have sighed over the advertising draped over these landmarks while undergoing restoration. Given wide-ranging outcry, the Palazzo Ducale might retire from its brief, inglorious career hawking Swatches.

**THIS IMAGE  
IS NOT AVAILABLE  
DUE TO  
COPYRIGHT  
RESTRICTIONS**

*The Ponte dei Sospiri (Bridge of Sighs) connects the Palazzo Ducale and Prigioni Nuove*



© Lonely Planet. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'