

A Grand Plan:

Two Days in Venice

Elusive, floating, enigmatic, Venice rides in a misty middle distance of muted colours, a dreamlike place that begs description. Countless artists have tried with pen and brush to render the shimmering lagoon with its slender bell towers. It's an enticing vision, increasingly difficult to find amid the madding crowds in Saint Mark's Square, but we'll show you how.

AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH

Prostrate on that *palazzo* bed, you'll want to savour those tranquil waking moments in La Serenissima. A room with a view is a must-have in Venice, but finding one for the right price is an art in itself. Those in the know will plump for room No 11 at the **Ai Do Mori** (private terrace overlooking San Marco, anyone?), or Nos 7 and 9 at **Hotel Galleria** (Grand Canal views); or maybe you prefer to eschew the water for the rare walled gardens of the **Palazzo Abadessa** and **Oltre Il Giardino**?

Leaving your *pied-a-l'eau*, you'll be wondering where to start. Those of you jaded and jaundiced by all that standing and staring will appreciate the wisdom of discovering Venice alongside a Venetian. So why not join Mara Martin (of Osteria Da Fiore fame) and Sara Cossiga in their Grand Canal palazzo for a morning cookery course? They're run by **Venice & Veneto Gourmet** (www.venicevenetogourmet.com), who also offer wine-tasting courses and gourmet walking tours like the 'Fish & Fishermen' tour in westernmost Dorsoduro. Here you can jostle in the fish market in the people's platz, **Campo Santa Margherita**. Afterwards, rest your road-weary feet among the wannabes at **Margaret Duchamp** (Campo Santa Margherita 3019).

SMART ART

OK, so Venice is a work of art and you want to see some of those Titians and Tintoretts before the day is out. Walking south of the Campo Santa Margherita you can amble along one of Venice's most picturesque waterways, the **Rio di San Trovaso**, before hopping over the Ponte Lungo and north to the **Galleria dell'Accademia** (Campo della Carità; www.gallerieaccademia.org), the city's single most important repository of art. If this Renaissance tableau is a touch too traditional, opt for modernist-with-the-most, the **Peggy Guggenheim Collection** (Fondamenta Venier dai Leoni 701; www.guggenheim-venice.it), which charts most of the major art movements of the 20th century.

Living it large – *largissimo* – is part and parcel of the Venetian experience. Although this requires a certain fiscal flexibility, what's Venice without a Silver Bullet or prosecco at **Harry's Bar** (Calle Vallaresso 1323)? Then glide on a cocktail-induced cloud to dine on the laughably magical terraces of the **Hotel Danieli** (Riva degli Schiavoni, Castello 4196; www.starwood.com/luxury) or the **Hotel Monaco & Grand Canal** (Calle Vallaresso, San Marco 1325; www.summithotels.com). Starry-eyed from all that candle light, finish off the evening in **Centrale** (Piscina Frezzaria 1659/b; www.centrale-lounge.com), San Marco's slice of Soho.

THE TRAFFIC IS HELL

It's impossible to ignore the water-based weirdness of Venice so plan your second day around the lagoon. It's 50km long and 16km wide, and a mysterious place; it's also where Venetians go to escape the city. So take

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to the waves in your own (yes, that's right, your very own) motorboat. You can hire them at **Brussa is Boat** (Cannaregio 331; www.brussaisboat.it) although the more nautically challenged might prefer the tailor-made tours offered by **RiViviNatura** (Calle dei Vitturi, San Marco; www.rivivinatura.it). Still, why not? You'd hire a scooter in Rome, so why not a boat in Venice?

With your fate in your own hands you're free to explore a million miles from the crowds of the Rialto. First stop, dock at **Murano** to browse the elaborate glassworks in the **Museo del Vetro** (Fondamenta Giustinian 8; www.museiciviviceneziani.it). Further out is **Burano**, a pretty fishing village of bright, bon-bon-coloured houses, famous for its lace industry. You can get a glimpse of the spider-like intricacy of the work at the **Museo del Merletto** (Piazza Galuppi 187; www.museiciviviceneziani.it) before heading on to abandoned **Torcello**, the first city of the lagoon (built in 639). Its great basilica, the **Cattedrale di Santa Maria Assunta** (Piazza Torcello), straddles the great divide between Byzantium and Rome. Across the curved surfaces of the apse is one of the finest works of art in the city – the Madonna, tears upon her mosaic cheeks, holding the Christ Child. Venice has nothing fairer to show. Although the island is home to a mere 20 people these days it still takes care of mortal comforts too, and you'll eat well at **Locanda Cipriani** (Piazza Santa Fosca 29; www.locandacipriani.com). On Burano, opt for the noisy family trattoria, **Al Gatto Nero** (Fondamenta della Giudecca 88).

Head home in the gathering dusk, past **St Mark's Square** and Longhena's dazzling white monolith the **Chiesa di Santa Maria della Salute**, and up the length of the **Grand Canal**. It's a singular experience, and one that will make you feel part of the great graceful watery ballet that makes Venice unique.

THE CLOSING NIGHT

For a perfect end to a perfectly decadent weekend book a seat at the stunningly refurbished **Teatro La Fenice** (Campo San Fantin, San Marco 1977; [www](http://www.teatrolafenice.it)

[.teatrolafenice.it](http://www.teatrolafenice.it)) and join the Venetians in their favourite pastime – people-watching at the opera.

SLEEPING

Budget:

Hotel Galleria (www.hotelgalleria.it; ☎ 041 522 7151) Location, location, location – a budget winner right on the Grand Canal.

Midrange:

Locanda Orseolo (www.locandaorseolo.com; ☎ 041 520 4877) A snug sanctuary just minutes from Saint Mark's.

Top End:

Oltre il Giardino (www.oltreilgiardino-venezia.com; ☎ 041 275 0015) With its own secret garden and modish style, il Giardino is just like staying with an enviably stylish friend.

See also:

Hotel Ai Do Mori: www.hotelaidomori.com

Palazzo Abadessa: www.abadessa.com

For more reviews of Venice accommodation, check out the Sleep section on www.lonelyplanet.com/accommodation.

By Paula Hardy

For the complete guide to Venice grab a copy of Lonely Planet's *Venice* guide; or get right under the skin of the city with *Best of Venice*. Both books are available online at shop.lonelyplanet.com.

