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Rialto Bridge, Venice

This image by Fleur Kinson. Cover image © Getty Images

Discover what lies behind the mask – Venice revealed with our essential guide

WELCOME!

Captivating Venice – *La Serenissima* – is, without doubt, one of Italy's most romantic, intriguing and historic cities, which is why I'm delighted to welcome you to this new guide, packed with essential travel advice and inspiration to help you organise your next visit to the city and the spectacular Veneto region that lies beyond. Whether you're a seasoned visitor or a first-timer, taking a weekend break or a longer tour; this informative guide has all you'll need for your perfect stay.

Let's begin with Venice and the lagoon, immersing ourselves in its history, sights and culture. We will then head off to the wider region of Veneto and further afield, with day trips, getaways and off-the-beaten-track itineraries for you to enjoy, whatever the season. I know you'll find plenty of ideas here to take on your travels, and when you're back home, why not drop us a line and tell us all about it at italia@anthem-publishing.com? I look forward to hearing from you.

Buon viaggio!

Amanda

Amanda Robinson, Editor

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VENICE & VENETO 2019

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT...

➤ **On all our restaurant reviews the following symbols indicate the price range of dishes per person:**

€ **up to €25** (Great grub on a budget)

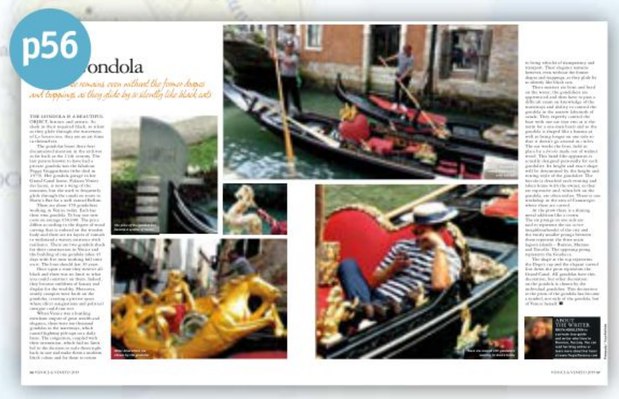
€€ **€26-€50** (Delicious delights but a little heftier on the wallet)

€€€ **more than €50** (Gourmet dining for a really big night out)

Bridge reflections, Venice

VENICE

Plan and enjoy your perfect visit to La Serenissima with itineraries, short stays, expert travel advice and more...



Welcome to Venice

Venice comes to life during its carnival, and the city is thronged with revellers in elaborate masks and costumes. The narrow streets, picturesque canals and famous landmarks are enlivened with spectacle of all kinds...

48 HOURS AT THE

Venice Carnival

It's one of the world's must-visit cities. **Mario Matassa** braves the crowds to experience Venice for the most exciting time in its calendar – the famous carnival

A friend told me that it's both the best and the worst time to visit Venice. I now understand what he meant. I can physically hear Venice groan. It's groaning under the weight of the crowds. I wonder if, like an elevator, there is a human weight limit to the city? After all, beneath the stone and concrete, I'm standing on nothing more than millions of wooden piles embedded in successive layers of mud. Of course, while it's common knowledge that Venice is sinking – at a rate that depends upon which particular study you happen to agree with or read – the suggestion that the weight of tourism is somehow to blame has been largely, albeit not entirely, discredited.

JOINING THE CROWD

Venice receives up to an estimated 20 million visitors per year. It's a figure that dwarfs the mere 60,000 permanent inhabitants of the historic city centre. And right now, as I struggle with luggage over the multiple lanes of the Rialto Bridge, it seems that they've all chosen today to visit. They haven't, of course, but the carnival is certainly one of Italy's most anticipated and

WHERE TO EAT

OSTERIA BEA VITA ❶
Sestiere Cannaregio 3082, Venice
☎ **+39 041 275 9347**
Situated near the historic Jewish Ghetto, Bea Vita is a rustic, traditional *osteria* popular with local workers. The menu is dictated by the seasons and the set lunches are substantial and great value.
€

TRATTORIA ALLA RIVETTA ❷
Ponte San Provolo, Castello, Venice
☎ **+39 041 528 7302**
Frequented by gondoliers, this trattoria offers traditional Venetian cuisine at a reasonable price. Seafood dominates the menu and the specialities of the day are proudly displayed, in typical Venetian fashion, in the front window. The restaurant is open all day and popular with both locals and tourists, so whatever time you come, be prepared to wait for a table.
€ €

CANTINA DO MORI ❸
Sottoportego do Mori, Rialto, Venice
☎ **+39 041 522 5401**
This Venetian *bacaro* – traditional-style bar – is a veritable institution. Next to the market, it's standing room only. However, it's a great place to eat *cicheti* or *panini* on the hop and it won't cost the earth. It's popular with local market vendors and trade is brisk so you won't have to wait long as people eat and go!
€ €

IL REFOLO ❹
Sestiere Santa Croce 1459, Venice
☎ **+39 041 524 0016**
This is the place to go if you want an authentic pizza. The pizzeria caters for both traditional and inventive tastes. The Pizza del Doge (with ham, radicchio, cherry tomatoes and mozzarella) is especially tasty. Make sure you book in advance and be prepared to pay a premium for the upscale fare.
€ €

BIRRARIA LA CORTE ❺
Campo San Polo 2168, 30125 Venice
☎ **+39 041 275 0570**
www.birrarialacorte.it
Away from the madding crowds, this converted stable now houses a warehouse-style pizzeria with 150 diners inside and another 150 outside. The prices are down-to-earth (with a pizza costing on average €8) with fresh pasta and fish is on the menu too. It's popular with locals and packs out quickly, making for a noisy and lively atmosphere.
€

DON'T MISS

PASTRIES
With a period of fasting on the horizon, Carnival is traditionally a time to indulge in pastries. Venice is famed for its fried carnival delights, from *fritelle* or Venetian *fritola* to *galani* (also called *chiacchiere* or *crostoli*). They can be bought from bakers, cake shops and stalls any time from the beginning of January through to Fat Tuesday.

KEY TO RESTAURANT PRICES (full meal per person, not including wine)
€ Up to €25
€ € €26-€50
€ € € More than €50

celebrated annual parties. With no admission fee – at least not for the street events – it's hardly a surprise that visitors descend from literally every corner of the globe: last year one estimate put the number of visitors at around one million. That's a big party, by any standard. But then, no other city does carnival quite like Venice. So, if you are prepared to confront the masses or, rather, be carried along with the flow, the spectacle of the Venice carnival is an experience not to be missed.

It took me a good ten minutes to navigate my way through the crowds to the other end of the bridge (a walk that should take a minute!) only to discover from a helpful police woman in ornate uniform that I was on the wrong side of the canal. But in the carnival atmosphere it's difficult to get despondent – it is, after all, a party. I picked up my bags and turned about.

HISTORY OF CARNIVAL

There are all sorts of perfectly good reasons to visit Venice. Along with Rome, Florence and Naples, it's one of the country's most interesting cities – architecturally and historically. It is also, after Rome and Florence, the greatest treasure-house of Italian art. If that is not reason enough, Venice is by far the most picturesque Italian city, the (world) capital of romance and, also, a great place simply to come and eat seafood. But on this occasion I wasn't here for any of those reasons. Along with practically everyone else that visits Venice over the two weeks preceding Ash Wednesday, foremost in my mind was the carnival.

The fact is, just as Venice isn't just any old city, so the carnival isn't just any old party. Indeed, as far as parties are concerned, the Venetian carnival has stood the test of time. Although the origins of the carnival probably date further back, the earliest mention of it has been found in a document dated May 1268. In its early form the carnival was an excuse for licentious behaviour – the custom of wearing masks originated as a means to protect anonymity. From the 14th century onwards, however, various new laws were implemented to halt the city's slide into moral decline, culminating in the 18th century in a complete ban on the wearing of masks within the city.

The modern-day version of carnival dates back a mere three decades to February 1979. It was a more muted affair than today's carnival, composed almost entirely of locals. The following year, thanks to good weather and local enthusiasm, the event was hailed in the local press as the only truly 'Venetian' carnival ever held. The celebrations took place throughout the city and culminated

From left: Cafés of Piazza San Marco are packed; striking carnival costumes

in an enormous ball held in Piazza San Marco on Fat Tuesday – Mardi Gras or Shrove Tuesday as it's also known. Indeed, the success of the event was such that it attracted considerable outside interest and within a few short years Venice's carnival was receiving 100,000 visitors every day, elevating it to the iconic event that it is today.

DECIDING WHAT TO DO

Venice has so much to offer the visitor the problem is always deciding what to do. This problem is exacerbated if you are travelling in company. They say two heads are better than one, but three heads, in my opinion, is a recipe for confusion. I met up at my hotel with my mother and sister, both of whom are no strangers to Italy, but in the innumerable times they've visited, neither had yet had the opportunity to experience the Venetian carnival. Before leaving the hotel we came to a tacit agreement that we'd simply take things easy and soak up the atmosphere of a city in celebration. I realised the flaw in the plan only minutes after walking out the door of the hotel. No matter how hard I've tried, I never can quite understand the attraction of window shopping. With my mother and sister firmly affixed to the window of the first shoe shop we had passed, we were forced to re-evaluate, deciding it might be best to part ways and meet up later that afternoon in Piazza San Marco for drinks. I promptly left them to their own devices.

The carnival was everywhere. For the two weeks running up to Lent it completely takes over the city streets and canals. Everyone has an idea of the carnival from images they've seen in the media, but nothing quite beats seeing the real thing – especially given the stunning city backdrop. I'm not usually keen on crowds, but they come as part of the package as far as the carnival is concerned. In fact, for those who go the distance and don full carnival dress, attracting a crowd is what it's all about. The city effectively becomes a stage for impromptu photo shoots – so don't expect to get anywhere in a hurry.

My plan was to make my way to Piazza San Marco, Venice's most famed landmark and a good place to soak in the atmosphere. The ➤

Just as Venice isn't just any old city, so the carnival isn't just any old party...

DON'T MISS

TOP VIEWS
No trip to Venice is complete without a ride to the top of the San Marco bell tower – the mighty campanile. At just under 100 metres high, on a clear day its majestic position offers breathtaking views of the city and lagoon. Book your advance ticket (€13), www.basilicasanmarco.it/basilica/campanile/

WHERE TO STAY

HOTEL DANIELI 6
Riva degli Schiavoni 4196, Venice
☎ +39 041 522 6480
www.the-luxury-collection.marriott.com
One of Venice's most luxurious hotels. Think hand-blown Murano glass chandeliers, marble columns, antiques and you get the picture. Add to that one of Venice's most prestigious locations, next to the Palazzo Ducale, a few steps from St Mark's square, and you'll feel part of the jet set. However, be warned, this sort of package comes with a price!

HOTEL ABBAZIA 7
Calle Priuli dei Cavaletti, Cannaregio 68
☎ +39 041 717333
Close to the Grand Canal and Santa Lucia train station, don't let the unexciting exterior put you off. This former abbey has an elegant, warm interior. The hotel also boasts a small courtyard garden, which is unusual in the city. Prices are reasonable so this hotel offers a good option close to all the major attractions.

HOTEL CA' DEI CONTI 8
Castello 4429, Venice
☎ +39 041 277 0500
www.cadeiconti.com
If you want to know what it feels like to live in the 18th century, this is the place to go. The building, which belonged to an aristocratic family, has been lovingly restored with meticulous attention to detail. Rooms are beautiful, lounges are splendid and the terrace is a great place to unwind away from the crowds.

HOTEL MONACO E GRAND CANAL 9
San Marco 1332, Venice
☎ +39 041 520 0211
www.hotelmonaco.it
This elegant hotel was once the haunt of Giacomo Casanova. The building dates from 1638, and overlooks the Grand Canal. Its 100 rooms are furnished in contemporary style, yet do not lose the charm of the former residence.

HOTEL HEUREKA 10
Fondamenta Gasparo Contarini 3534, Cannaregio, 30121 Venice
☎ +39 041 524 6460
www.hotel-heureka.com
post@hotel-heureka.com
If you want a quiet bolthole to retreat too, head over to Hotel Heureka in Cannaregio which combines original 16th-century features and unique, colourful and luxurious interior design with great flair. The fusion of ancient and modern is just beautiful and the welcome warm and friendly. There is also a tranquil and totally secluded garden tucked away behind the hotel which is delightful.

WHAT TO SEE AND DO

ST MARK'S BASILICA 11

The most famous of the city's churches and a world-famous landmark. With its Byzantine architecture, the basilica also reflects Venice's greatness through the ages as Venetians continued to embellish it with precious objects and works of art from across the world. It contains more than 8,000sqm of gold, bronze and various mosaics that have been developed over the 800 years of the building's history.

THE RIALTO BRIDGE 12

The Rialto Bridge, which spans the Grand Canal, first opened in 1181. Over the course of its history, it has been replaced, collapsed and rebuilt many times. The current bridge was designed by Antonio da Ponte and was completed in 1591. It was the only bridge across the Grand Canal until 1854. The bridge and surrounding area is one of the most popular with tourists and is littered with bars, restaurants, boutiques and artisan shops.

CARNIVAL COSTUME BALL

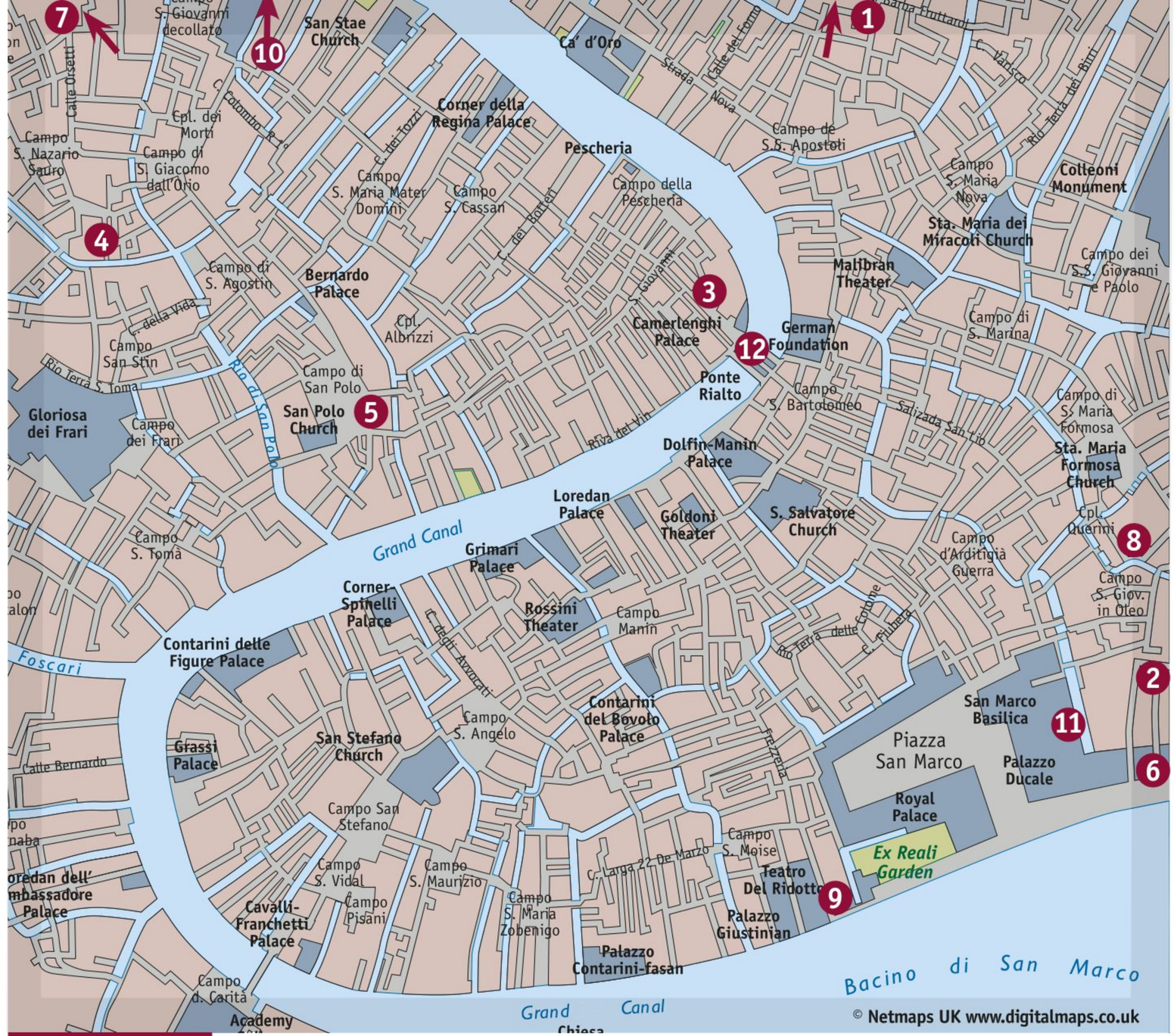
The carnival balls are open to anyone in costume. Most of the grand hotels host a ball and even offer costume hire services. The best costume balls are held in the historic palaces frequented by Casanova, from the Ridotto to Ca Zenobio's Baroque Hall of Mirrors. Expect to pay about €250 per person depending on venue and day. Full information on the events to be held can be found at **www.venicecarnival.org**

MURANO GLASS

Glass making on the island of Murano dates back to the ninth century and is a tradition that is still very much alive and symbolises the city. Find out about the history of this craft at the Museum of Glass in Palazzo Giustiniani with its impressive collection of glass through the ages. Many of Murano's workshops, for a small fee, will offer visitors the chance to see how the glass is blown. Shop around for the best price on a keepsake to take home.

A RIDE IN A GONDOLA

Despite popular belief a gondola is never 'poled' through the water, as the waters are too deep. The gondolier paddles the gondola through the waters. An ancient law mandated that all gondolas should be painted black, with each separate component down to the gondolier's hat made by artisan craftspeople in the surrounding area. Expect to pay €80 for a 40-minute trip in a gondola. They carry a maximum of six people, although the price will rise to €100 in the evening. Also, gondoliers do not ordinarily sing – you have to pay a little extra for that!


Grand Canal
Bacino di San Marco
Piazza San Marco
San Marco Basilica
Palazzo Ducale
Royal Palace
Ex Reali Garden
Teatro Del Ridotto
Palazzo Giustinian
Palazzo Contarini-fasan
Rialto Bridge
Ponte Rialto
Fondaco dei Tedeschi
Fondaco dei Turchi
Ca' d'Oro
Pescheria
Fabbriche Vecchie
Fabbriche Nuove
Rialto Market
Campo S. Giacomo dell'Orio
Campo S. Polo
Campo S. Tomà
Campo dei Frari
Campo S. Stin
Campo S. Agostin
Campo S. Nazario Sauro
Campo S. Maria Mater Domini
Campo S. Cassan
Campo della Pescheria
Campo de S.S. Apostoli
Campo S. Maria Nova
Campo di S. Marina
Campo di S. Maria Formosa
Campo d'Arditigià Guerra
Campo S. Giov. in Oleo
Campo S. Angelo
Campo San Stefano
Campo S. Vidal
Campo Pisani
Campo S. Maurizio
Campo S. Maria Zobenigo
Campo S. Moise
Campo d. Carità
Academy
Gloriosa dei Frari
San Polo Church
Bernardo Palace
Camerlenghi Palace
German Foundation
Malibran Theater
Sta. Maria dei Miracoli Church
Colleoni Monument
Campo dei S.S. Giovanni e Paolo
Sta. Maria Formosa Church
Dolfin-Manin Palace
Loredan Palace
Goldoni Theater
S. Salvatore Church
Grimani Palace
Corner Spinelli Palace
Rossini Theater
Contarini delle Figure Palace
Contarini del Bovolo Palace
San Stefano Church
Grassi Palace
Cavalli-Franchetti Palace
Loredan dell' Ambassadore Palace
Corner della Regina Palace
Rio di San Polo
Rio Terrà S. Tomà
Rio Terà delle Colonne
Rio Terà dei Bini
Rio Terà Foscari
Calle Bernardo
Calle Ossetti
Calle del Forno
Strada Nova
Salizada San Lio
Riva del Vin
Fondamenta Contarini
Fondamenta Duodo
Fondamenta Gasparo Contarini
Fondamenta Venier
Fondamenta Ca' Rizzi
Fondamenta Ca' Foscari
Fondamenta Ca' Dario
Fondamenta Ca' Da Mosto
Fondamenta Ca' Bembo
Fondamenta Ca' Zenobio
Fondamenta Ca' Rezzonico
Fondamenta Ca' Mocenigo
Fondamenta Ca' Tron
Fondamenta Ca' Da Lezze
Fondamenta Ca' Bragadin
Fondamenta Ca' Marcello
Fondamenta Ca' Corner
Fondamenta Ca' Vendramin

More incredible costumes at Venice Carnival

'missing the point', 'Hallowe'en' and 'fancy dress' mentioned. It occurred to me that they were the ones missing the point. Carnival is about inhibition and letting yourself go. Have a Bellini, I thought to myself, it is a party after all!

FAT TUESDAY

Before leaving for Venice a friend advised me that the carnival is best visited between acts. It turned out to be valuable advice. There are certain times of day when you can escape the madding crowds and wander freely – well, almost: Before nine in the morning, for example, if you are after a few of those quintessential photographs of Venice's landmarks. Moreover, if you are willing to forgo sit-down meals and eat on the go, the crowds tend to dissipate over the peak lunch and dinner hours. Alternatively, opt for a stand-up lunch of *cicheti* (tapas-style bites) with the locals in a *bacari* – akin to a snack bar – and save valuable time. Usually Fat Tuesday is less hectic than the preceding Saturday and Sunday as many Italian daytrippers visit the city over the weekend. And, finally, it seems that the further you move from Piazza San Marco, the thinner the crowds become.

Venture into the labyrinth of alleyways in any direction, following only your ears to the sound of music and you'll encounter the panoply of attractions the carnival and the city has to offer. I was quite surprised at the variety of activities on the go, whatever your tastes or age group. It seemed that every piazza was given over to the carnival – from luna parks for children, medieval music concerts, mini theatre and mime to historical re-enactments, street artists and musicians, passing bands and gastronomy stalls. By evening we had walked the length and breadth of the city and experienced carnival in all its celebratory colours. It truly is a unique cocktail of tradition, entertainment, history and harmless frivolity, captured in a perfect setting.

As we made our way back towards the Rialto Bridge for a much anticipated and well earned farewell dinner along the Grand Canal my sister and I started discussing more important matters – who was having what for dinner? Seafood, of course, but in a city famed in this regard, the choice of which dish to go for is a matter of serious thought. What would it be? *Baccalà Mantecato*, *seppie col nero* or *fritto misto*, we deliberated? "Why not have them all?" my mother interjected. We looked at her, knowing only too well she wasn't joking. Italian mothers rarely joke when it comes to matters of the plate. Suddenly it occurred to me – why not? It was, after all, Fat Tuesday! V

DON'T MISS

MARKET VISITS
Just by the Rialto Bridge, the market is a must-visit for food lovers. It has been here since 1097. About a century later a boat bridge was constructed to facilitate access – shortly after, this was replaced with the Rialto Bridge. Just after dawn boats begin to arrive with fresh produce and fish. It's a great place to wander and soak up the atmosphere.

GETTING THERE

➤ BY PLANE
Venice is served by two airports – Marco Polo and Treviso. Ryanair flies from London Stansted to Treviso, where there are regular bus and train services that take just under an hour to Venice. Or fly with easyjet from East Midlands, Bristol and Gatwick (check your local airport for other flights) or BA (from Heathrow, Gatwick and London City) to Venice's Marco Polo airport, just across the lagoon.

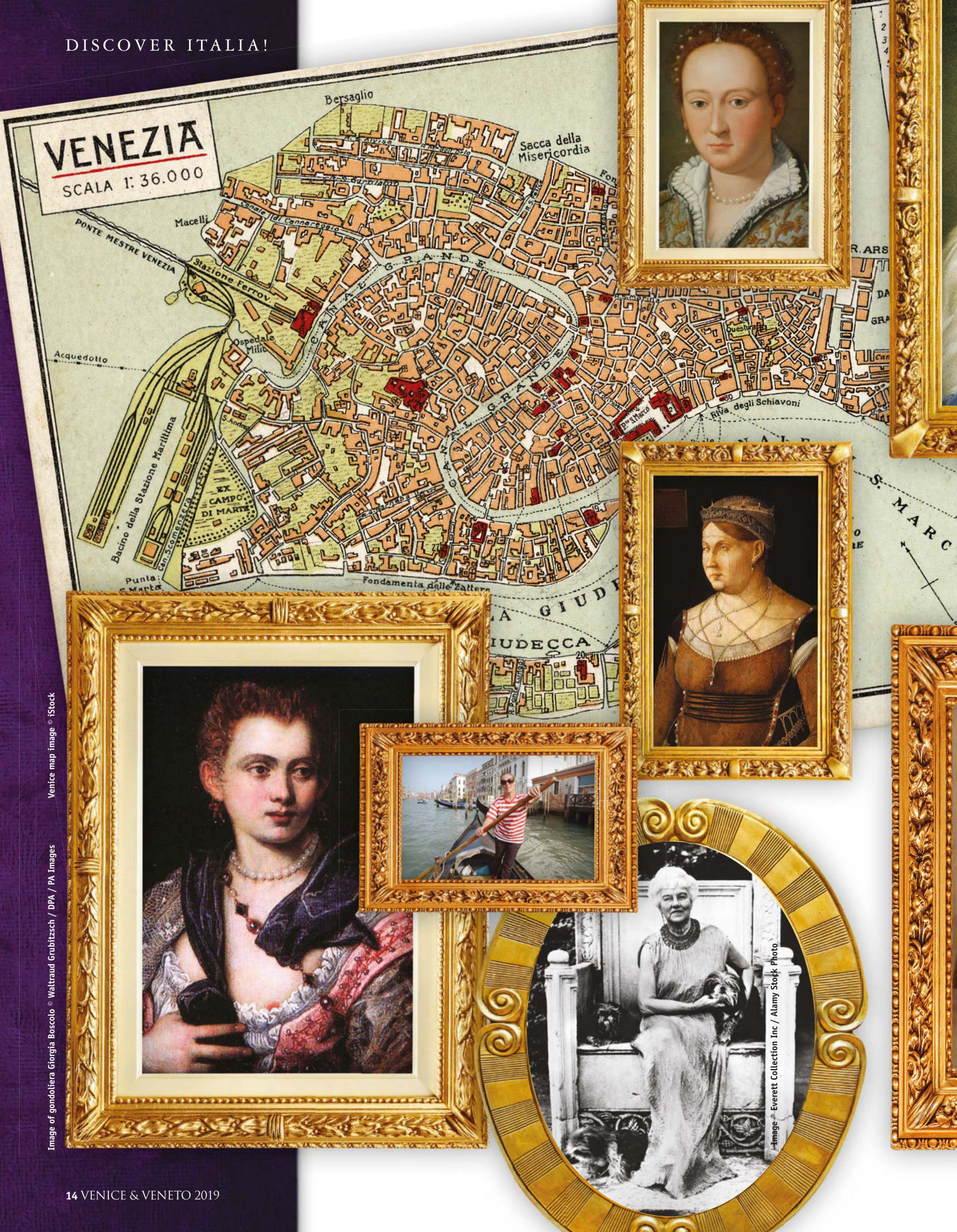


Image of gondoliera Giorgia Boscolo © Waltraud Grubitzsch / DPA / PA Images

Venice map image © iStock

Image © Everett Collection Inc / Alamy Stock Photo

The Women of Venice

Local journalist and guide **Sara Scarpa** follows in the footsteps of ground-breaking Venetian women – from the first woman in the world to graduate, to the first female gondolier

Against a deep blue sky covered with fluffy clouds stands a beautiful voluptuous woman with golden locks, elegantly dressed in ivory and gold and wearing a pearl necklace with matching earrings. She stands on the clouds between the two towers of the Arsenale (a complex of former shipyards and armouries) while being crowned with laurel by the personification of Victory. At her feet are other personifications – Peace, Honour and Happiness – and on the balcony and lower below more figures are lifting their heads up to admire her.

The woman in question is Venice, or rather her personification, in a stunning painting by the great artist Veronese – *The Apotheosis of Venice* – which you can admire in the Great Council Chamber in the Doge's Palace. In the same palace, in the Chamber of the Council of Ten, you can also admire, by the same artist, *Juno Bestowing her Gifts on Venice*. Here, Venice is portrayed as a woman with similar features, sitting between the lion and the globe and receiving the *corno ducale* (the Doge's hat) and gold from Juno, a clear allegory of the Venetian power and greatness that reached distant lands. But my favourite painting inside the Doge's Palace is, of course, *Venice and Neptune* by the great Venetian artist Tiepolo, which can be seen in the Four Doors Room. This portrays a blonde woman resting her arm on a lion's head while receiving gold and jewels from Neptune to symbolise the fact that Venice's wealth and power came from the sea.

***The Apotheosis of Venice* by Paolo Veronese**

We often tend to associate a city with an image and, in the case of Venice, also with a gender – I always refer to the city with the feminine pronoun. This might well be because of these magnificent paintings but Venice is for me, and for many others, definitely a "she".

The greatness of every city is always made up of the actions and the stories of the people inhabiting the place.

Many are the personalities who have left their mark on the history of the Serenissima in past centuries and, contrary to the norm, amongst them are many women. As it would be an impossible task for me to talk about them all, I will try to follow an itinerary in the city that will allow me to talk about just a few who have always seemed fascinating to me.

WHAT TO SEE AND DO

CHIESA DI SAN SALVADOR
San Marco, 4835
☎ +39 041 523 6717
In this beautiful church most famous for housing Titian's last painting, is also the Renaissance monument with the ashes of Caterina Cornaro. In its central part a bas-relief illustrates the scene of the Queen of Cyprus giving up her crown to the Doge.

CALLE PARADISO
Near Campo Santa Maria Formosa, this *calle*, with its late-15th-century stone tympanum, the *barbacani*, is not to be missed on your way to the big square. The arch portrays the Madonna with her mantle open to protect a couple kneeling in prayer – from the coats-of-arms it has been deduced that it probably commemorates the wedding between Alvise Mocenigo and Pellegrina Foscari in 1491. With his wife's dowry, Alvise bought the 26 houses in that *calle*.

PEGGY GUGGENHEIM
Dorsoduro, 701
☎ +39 041 240 5411
www.guggenheim-venice.it
Facing the Canal Grande, not far from the Salute church, the Palazzo Venier dei Leoni houses the Peggy Guggenheim Collection. Home to the American heiress for thirty years, the museum houses her private collection of modern art and also temporary exhibitions. The museum is the most visited in Venice after the Doge's Palace.

CASINO VENIER
Ponte dei Baretteri, 4939
☎ +39 041 522 7079
Not far from the Chiesa di San Salvador, this *ridotto* is today the seat of the Association Alliance Française. It dates back to 1750 and still preserves its original appearance with marble floors, fireplaces, stucco and frescoes. If you look up in front of the entrance you will notice the spyhole through which you could check who was about to enter, and under the bridge you will notice what once was a secret passage for getting out without being seen!

CAMPO DELLE MOSCHE
Literally, the Square of Flies. It is not near the rest of our itinerary but the name itself is too interesting not to mention it. Located near San Pantaleone, in the Dorsoduro district, according to tradition the name comes from the place where they produced *mosche* (flies) – small pieces of black cloth that women, mainly, used to put on their face as beauty spots. These beauty spots had different meanings according to their position on the face – for example, one near an eye would mean "I am irresistible"!

❶ THE LOST LOVE OF A NOBLEWOMAN

Image of Palazzo Trevisan Cappello by Abxbay (Own work) [CC BY-SA 3.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0)], via Wikimedia Commons

The Palazzo Trevisan Capello, home of the noblewoman Bianca Capello, until, that is, she fell in love...

We will start our walk from a square off the beaten path – Campo Sant'Aponal in the district of San Polo, near San Silvestro boat stop. We walk towards the deconsecrated 11th-century church and then on to Calle Bianca Cappello. Near the crooked bridge you will see the Palazzo Trevisan Cappello where, in the 16th century, lived the beautiful noblewoman Bianca Cappello. Bianca fell in love with Piero Bonaventuri, a Florentine man who used to work as a bank clerk in the firm of Salviati just across the canal. The couple escaped to Florence and were declared outlaws in Venice, but their love did not last long as Piero found a new lover and Bianca became the mistress first and then the wife of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Francesco de' Medici. Venice, of course, realising that having a Venetian as Duchess was a very advantageous situation, dropped its death sentence and suddenly declared Bianca "the adopted and beloved daughter of our Republic". But the couple did not live happily ever after, as indeed their love was doomed: Bianca and Francesco both died from poisoning. Dark and sinister Venice…

❷ THE LADIES OF THE OLDEST PROFESSION

Image © Iain Reed

Il Ponte delle Tette and its house of erstwhile ill-repute

Let's now move to something more frivolous to cheer us up. We take the nearby Calle Stretta which, as the name suggests, is the narrowest street in Venice, walking to Campiello Albrizzi and from here to Calle Rio Terrà Carampani. Here we find the Ponte delle Tette, the Bridge of Tits. The strange name derives from the fact that in centuries past prostitutes would show their naked bosoms from the windows to attract passers-by into the brothel. This district was, in fact, one of the few places, together with the Castelletto in Rialto, where brothels were allowed. Walking in this area in the 18th century we would have probably come across the famous womaniser Casanova.

❸ THE ACADEMIC AND THE QUEEN

Now we will walk back to Bianca's palace and keep on walking to Campo San Silvestro. From the Fondamenta we will take a short *traghetto* ride across to the other side of the Canal Grande. The *traghetto* is a fun way of traversing the Canale Grande; it is a public crossing service by gondola, mainly used by locals but open to all. It is only a two-minute journey but at least we will get a gondola ride for just two euros and we will manage to avoid the hordes of people taking selfies on the Rialto Bridge, arriving at Riva del Carbon just a few steps from Palazzo Loredan.

Here, in the 17th century, lived **Elena Lucrezia Cornaro Piscopia**, the first woman in the world to graduate. At a time when education was usually reserved for privileged men, thanks to her father's encouragement Lucrezia mastered seven languages (Italian, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Spanish, French and Arabic), philosophy, theology, astronomy and mathematics and played almost all the musical instruments known at that time.

This genius came from one of the most famous noble Venetian families, the Cornaro family, which produced four doges and nine cardinals. She was therefore a distant relative of another extraordinary woman, **Queen Caterina Cornaro**. Born in Venice in 1454, Caterina also lived in a palace on the Canal Grande. When she was fourteen she was married by proxy to James II the Bastard, as the Serenissima planned to use her as a tool to control Cyprus and the Mediterranean. After the death of her husband and son she became Queen of Jerusalem, Cyprus and Armenia.

Caterina stood against the Spanish and the Venetians and reigned alone for 16 years until Venice eventually forced her to abdicate. In return for giving up her crown she was given the tiny reign of Asolo, a village near Venice, but the great woman did not give up and established there a magnificent Renaissance court, gathering famous artists (such as Giorgione and Gentile Bellini), writers (such as the Humanist Pietro Bembo) and many fellow musicians.

Image © Iain Reed

Top: This is where we take the traghetto, a public gondola service, across the water. If you want to take a gondola ride for just €2, this is the way to do it...

❹ A BITE TO EAT, THEN A POET'S CHURCH

Image © Iain Reed

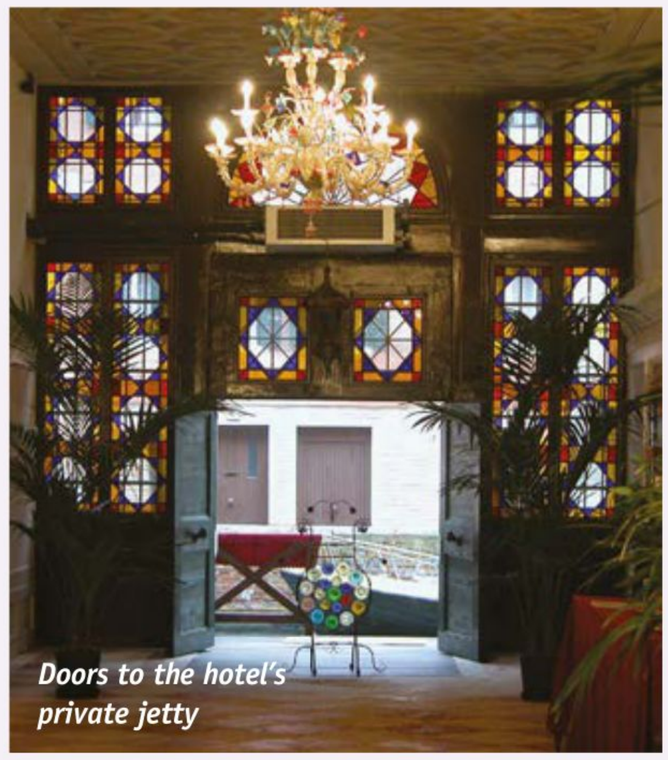
We now leave our Queen to turn into Calle del Carbon. Not far from here, in Calle Cavalli, we stop for a spritz and some *cicchetti* at Enoteca Al Volto, one of my favourite *osterie*. This is on a very quiet *calle* with a few small tables outside where we can sample some fantastic, fresh, homemade Venetian specialities such as *crostini* with *baccalà*, *tramezzini* and *risotto*. We then walk to Campo San Luca and to Calle del Teatro, passing San Salvador and reaching Campo San Bartolomeo. Just a stone's throw from Rialto bridge, this square with the monumental statue of Carlo Goldoni – the well-known 18th-century Venetian playwright and librettist – is where all the locals tend to meet for the first aperitif, one of many to come…

Find a great little osteria near the Rialto Bridge

Image by Debra Barber

SECRET GARDEN NEAR THE GRAND CANAL

Ornate key for your stay


Doors to the hotel's private jetty

The main staircase carved in marble

When you've been out and about all day, following in the footsteps of these redoubtable women of Venice, somewhere peaceful and out-of-the-way is a must to recharge your batteries. So step off the tourist trail and head to the northern district of Cannaregio, a vibrant residential quarter threaded with quiet canals. Tucked away on Calle Priuli is the beautiful 16th-century Palazzo Abadessa offering elegant hospitality in 13 sumptuously restored rooms and suites. Owned by the same family for almost 40 years, this 4-star *residenza d'epoca* is close to the Ca' d'Oro *vaporetto* stop and ideally placed for Rialto Market, Saint Mark's Square and other notable city landmarks. It's less than a minute's walk from Strada Nuova, the main thoroughfare through Cannaregio and about five minutes on foot from the Rialto Bridge.

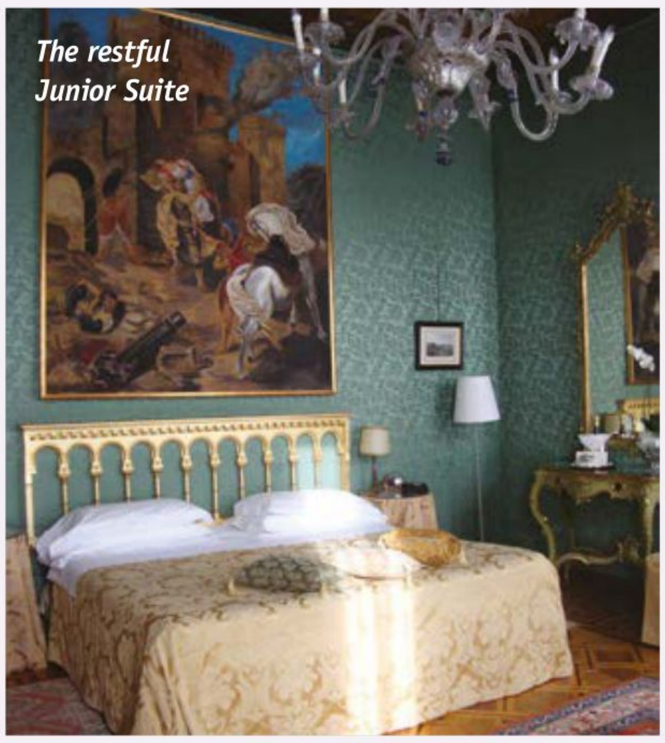
So when you feel rested and ready to face the fray again, there is much to explore just on your doorstep. And rested you will be, when you realise that this *palazzo* is the proud possessor of one of the very few private gardens in Venice. Any patch of green is highly prized on this crowded island, but it's like stepping into a cool, calming oasis when you arrive here. The lush green lawn is bordered by ornamental flower beds while mature trees provide welcome shade in the often sultry heat of the Venetian day. This secret garden is a tranquil place that invites you to stay just a little bit longer…

Each of the rooms and suites are uniquely decorated and individually styled. Many of the bedroom walls are lined with authentic Venetian silk brocade wall-coverings, there is a quite stunning marble staircase with beautiful school of Tintoretto paintings, frescoes, Murano glass chandeliers and carefully chosen pieces of antique furniture throughout.

Palazzo Abadessa's double and twin rooms start at €170 per night off-peak, and there are also the four sumptuous suites if you need more space in which to spread out. Check the website for the latest prices and special offers. A very substantial breakfast is included in the price and the well-stocked buffet table groans with freshly baked pastries, fresh fruit, yoghurts, charcuterie, cheeses, cereal and eggs to set you up for a day's walking.

There is no restaurant here for evening dining, but this area has many good options just a stone's throw away: Osteria Giorgione (www.osteriagiorgione.com) is a popular spot with locals and only a four-minute walk from the palazzo, while there are plenty of bars to sample authentic *cicchetti* if you just want a light bite and wine by the glass: but beware, those tasty little plates are rather moreish…

PALAZZO ABADESSA
Calle Priuli 4011, Cannaregio, Venice, 30131
☎ +39 041 241 3784
info@abadessa.com
www.abadessa.com


The restful Junior Suite

Chandelier on the elegant piano nobile

Rest a while in the secret garden

Images © Palazzo Abadessa/Dacotah Renneau

We take Calle della Bissa where hopefully we still have room for a *mozzarella in carrozza*, a fried mozzarella and ham sandwich, at Rosticceria Gislon. To burn off the calories we walk to San Lio and turn left on Calle del Paradiso to reach Campo Santa Maria Formosa, one of the biggest squares in Venice. The eponymous church takes its name from the Virgin Mary who, according to tradition, appeared in the form of a curvy (*formosa*) woman to the Bishop of Oderzo and told him to build her a church. This is **Veronica Franco**'s parish church – she was the most famous courtesan of all time, so good at her profession that even the King Henry III of France was her client! She used to visit the literary salon of her patron Domenico Venier in this square

at the corner with Calle Seconda dei Orbi (which today houses apartments and a bar), where she read and circulated her poems.

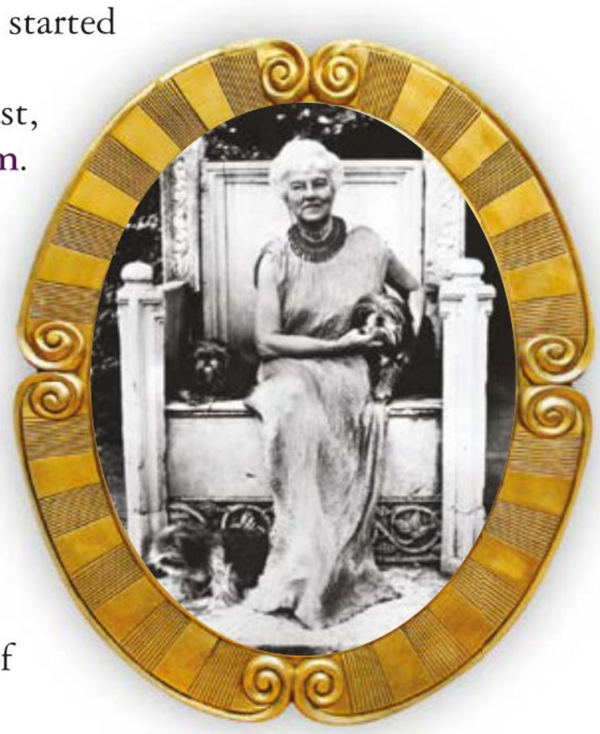
Above, the Campo Santa Maria Formosa, one of my favourite squares in Venice, as you can still see children playing football here, as they always used to do

❺ THE THREE WOMEN OF SALUTE

After lunch at the Enoteca Mascareta, which offers a wide selection of delicious cured pork with cheeses and *spaghetti alle vongole* – we take a short public boat ride from San Zaccaria to Salute. Here, between the Basilica della Madonna della Salute and San Vio, is where three extraordinary women lived and worked – Rosalba Carriera, Eleonora Duse and Peggy Guggenheim.

Rosalba Carriera is a fantastic 18th-century painter who is appreciated internationally and was famous even with kings during a time when it was difficult for women to be considered for any profession, never mind an artistic one. **Eleonora Duse**, born in Vigevano but with parents from Venice, lived for a long time in Palazzo Barbaro Wolkoff on the Canal Grande. She is the greatest actress of the Belle Époque in Italy and is remembered for her tormented love affair with Gabriele d'Annunzio, which started right here.

Last but not least, **Peggy Guggenheim**. This great art collector was, of course, American not Venetian, but she deserves to be included here as she has done so much for my city, which she loved, and was made an Honorary Citizen of Venice in 1962.



Below: Peggy Guggenheim, the great American art collector who made Venice her home

❻ THE FIRST FEMALE GONDOLIER

We close with a modern woman: **Giorgia Boscolo**, the woman who in 2010 – after almost a millennium during which driving a gondola had been a profession only for men – became the first *gondoliera* of Venice. Other women had tried, unsuccessfully, before her, including a German woman who had taken the exam four times and even then only got to row a gondola privately for a hotel. Only 24 years old and the mother of two children, after taking lessons from her father, who is himself a gondolier, the ambitious Giorgia passed the difficult exam and took to the water. Ⓥ

Right: Giorgia Boscolo, the first female gondolier in the entire history of Venice

VIEWPOINT

An art installation by Lorenzo Quinn on **Venice's Grand Canal** symbolised the grave threat to the city from rising waters caused by climate change...

Opposite the Rialto fish market, two giant hands emerged from the waters and touch against the Ca' Sagredo. Were they bracing the hotel, or reaching up to destroy it? The installation was the work of contemporary sculptor Lorenzo Quinn (son of the actor Anthony Quinn). Entitled *Support*, it was meant as a statement on climate change and the effect rising waters are having on the city. The work was commissioned for Biennale Arte 2017 and remained here until the city-wide art exhibition closed on November the 26th. "I wanted to sculpt what is considered the hardest and most technically challenging part of the human body. The hand holds so much power – the power to love, to hate, to create, to destroy," explained the artist. V

Image by Amanda Robinson

ITALIA! ICONS

Think of transport in Venice and you think of the gondola, but this is a relationship that has been developed in large part by the city's tourism industry. As a working boat, there are better options.

THE GONDOLA

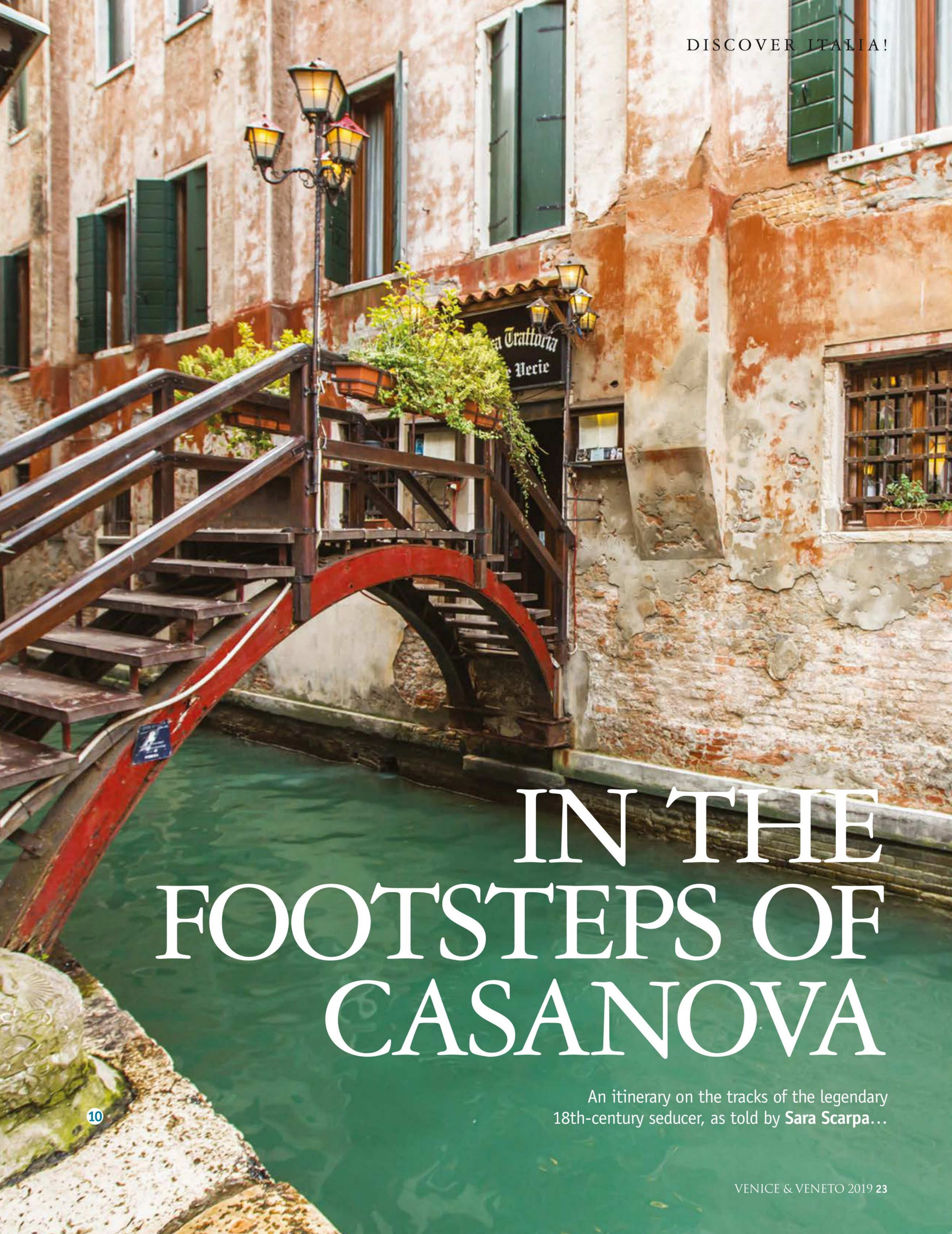
Though it is now recognized the world over as **the typical boat of Venice**, the gondola is in fact one of many classes of vessel developed in La Serenissima…

Rowing in Venice is done standing up, because the waters of Venice can be very shallow in places and you need to be able to see what you are rowing in. The other matter, other than the safety of your oars and the arms attached to them, is being able to see other traffic, of which there has always been plenty in Venice.

Today there are some 400 gondolas in the city, most of them in the tourist trade, but there used to be more. And gondolas weren't the only types of boats in Venice. The *caorlina* is another typically Venetian boat, one again that is rowed standing up. They used to be commonplace, though they are nowadays mostly reserved for racing. But that's not the only other boat to have evolved here either. There is the *gondolino*, the *pupparino,* the *mascareta*, the *batella*, the *batelon*, the *bragagna*, the *bragosso*, the *paeta*, the *topo*, the *topa*, the *trabaccolo*… And more. Some are rowed (standing up); some are sailed; some can be manoeuvred by either method.

But the gondola alone gives the tourist a sense of being ferried around in style, and it is for this reason, rather than any other, that it has become iconic. V

Photograph © iStock



IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF CASANOVA

An itinerary on the tracks of the legendary 18th-century seducer, as told by **Sara Scarpa**…

1

We start our journey in the district of San Marco, the sestiere where Giacomo was born and spent the first years of his life

Detail from a portrait of Giacomo Casanova by Anton Raphael Mengs

To many, Casanova is simply the reckless Venetian lover who once upon a time escaped from a prison cell. Portrayed as such over the years in film and television productions, this tarnished account of him is etched into the consciousness of anyone who attempts to connect the man to the legend. Unfortunately, he is not remembered for his translation of the Homer's *Iliad* nor for being a philosopher.

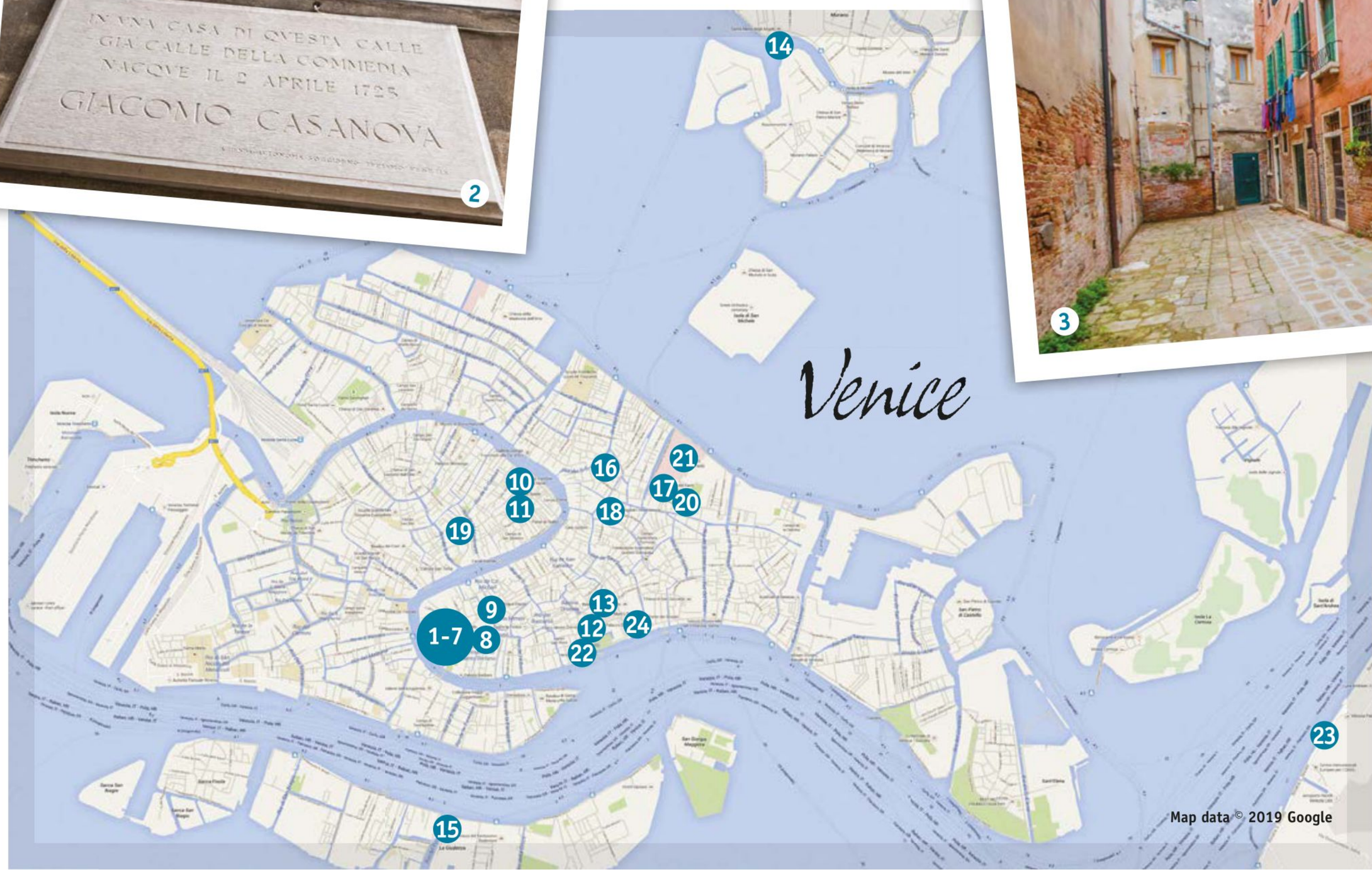
Scratch below this tainted surface and therein begins the true and extraordinary life of one of the most vibrant characters of 18th-century Europe.

Giovanni Giacomo Casanova was born in Venice in 1725, a writer, clergyman, lawyer, military officer, freemason violinist, conman, spy, politician, cabalist, and traveller who along the way seduced many women (more than 120 conquests by his own reckoning!) and after many centuries still charms us today through his detailed autobiography: *Histoire de ma vie* (The Story of My Life).

Casanova's exploits took place throughout Europe; London, Paris, Corfu and Constantinople, from debates with Voltaire to an audience with Catherine the Great of Prussia. However, Venice, his birthplace and the home of his heart, is where I want to take you. In spite of the fact that he spent little of his life in the city, Casanova is unthinkable without Venice.

A Venetian myself, I have always been fascinated by the captivating tales of his experiences in my hometown, which has changed little since the views which inspired Canaletto. The city offers the perfect backdrop to paint the libertine's actions. Without being an historian, Casanova paints a great portrait of the cultural and political Venetian scene in the 18th century – a time of decadence, the eve of the end of the grandeur of the Serenissima and of the decline of its maritime power in the Mediterranean. In that moment of decay there was no better reaction than transgression, frivolity and licentiousness. The Carnevale

Images, clockwise from above: Façade of the Church of San Samuele; plaque marking the birthplace of Casanova; the Corte dele Muneghe, where he spent much of his childhood; his portrait by Mengs



Photography © Sara Scarpa unless stated

was the best expression of this freedom – for many months and in many occasions throughout the year, Venetians used to hide their identity, gender and social class behind masks and they could act completely freely. This was the perfect background for Casanova's intrigues and adventures. "I will begin with this confession: whatever I have done in the course of my life, whether it be good or evil, has been done freely; I am a free agent," (Giacomo Casanova).

Casanova was such a complex individual that there could probably be so many versions of him and so many stories about him. They would, of course, only partially represent him and none would do him justice. While outlining his story I am not too concerned about distinguishing what is true and what are simply tales, as his fame lives on thanks to both elements just like the story of Venice itself does thanks to its history and legends. After centuries, the Venetian Seducer's legend still lives on and as per Casanova's wish that he be loved even after death...

CASANOVA'S EARLY LIFE AND FIRST LOVES

We start our journey in the district of San Marco, the *sestiere* where Giacomo was born and spent the first years of his life. Alight at San Samuele, which is located on Canale Grande and can be reached with the no. 2 vaporetto, you will arrive in the small Campo San Samuele. To the left of this square is Palazzo Grassi, the imposing classical building which houses great temporary art exhibitions. On the opposite side of the Canale you will find Ca' Rezzonico, a wonderful museum exhibiting artefacts from the exact time of Casanova's prime, and not to be missed.

From within the Campo you will be faced with the campanile and the façade of the church of San Samuele 1. This church was the setting for his parents' wedding and also where little Giacomo was baptised. During a short-lived career in the priesthood it is from this pulpit that Casanova gave his first one and a half sermons. The first one was successful and the charm of young Giacomo was already having an effect on the women attending the Mass – he collected money and received many love letters. Unfortunately, his second sermon was not a success... Following a wine-fuelled lunch to calm his nerves, he delivered a drunk and rambling sermon and afterwards, on realising the predicament he had put himself in, pretended to faint in order to bring the situation to an end...

A plaque marks the *calle* of his birthplace, a few metres away in Calle Malipiero 2, a typically narrow Venetian street once called Calle della Commedia. It was here in a house on the third floor that Casanova was born, literally onto the world stage, surrounded by a family of actors in a city famous for its theatres. His mother, Zanetta Farussi, was an actress and she was often travelling so Giacomo spent his childhood with his grandmother Marcia in a house in the nearby Corte dele Muneghe 3.

As a boy he was quite sickly and suffered from frequent nosebleeds. ➤

From his garden Casanova used to spend time gazing at his neighbour, the 17-year-old actress and singer Teresa Imer

Above, main image: Teresa Imer's palace overlooking Corte del Duca Sforza. Inset: Palazzo Bellavite; Cantina Do Spade, where you can take a drink while staying on the trail of Casanova

Due to the fact that at the age of eight, surprisingly, he still could not read nor write, and also because of his foolish expression, he was considered stupid. To start his education he was taken on a gondola to Padua, where he studied law and learned to play the violin.

After being refused by one of his first loves – the chaste Angela Tosello, Father Tosello's niece, who lived in a house just behind the theatre San Samuele in Calle Nani 4 he was soon consoled by Angela's relatives and friends, the Savorgnan sisters. In a house in Salidas San Samuele 5, in a vast bed on the fourth floor, all three of them lost their virginity. Later on, he enjoyed the protection of his neighbour, the 76-year-old senator Alvise Gasparo Malipiero, and he was often guest at his palace (palazzo Malipiero) 6.

From his garden he used to spend time gazing at his neighbour, the 17-year-old actress and singer Teresa Imer. She was often at the window "attracting the attention of the old man, even if she simply made him long for her and nothing more". Giacomo and the old senator were both besotted with her and when one day the Senator walked in on them during an uncompromising situation Casanova had to flee from a ground floor window to escape the beating the senator would give him. The lovers' paths was intertwined throughout their eventful lives and in 1758, while in Holland, Casanova was introduced to their child Sophia, who was already four at the time. Teresa Imer's palace looked over Corte del Duca Sforza 7 (she lived at number 3065).

A ten-minute walk from here in the direction of Campo Santo Stefano, you will find Campo San Maurizio. Here, at Palazzo Bellavite 8 his friend, the famous erotic poet Giorgio Baffo, introduced him to more of life's pleasures. If you will go back to Santo Stefano Square, you will pass the big monument with the statue of the Italian linguist and patriot Niccolò Tommaseo sitting on a pile of books (to whom locals refer as the "bookshitter"!) and turning right you will be in Campo Sant'Angelo 9. Here, almost in the middle of the square, there was a great marble table that was a sort of monument (which used to be the Tavola di Arruolamento, where money was laid out to encourage Venetians to join the army). One night, while they were out playing all sorts of pranks, Casanova and his friends overturned the table...

CASANOVA'S HANGOUTS

If you leave Campo Sant'Angelo and walk towards Campo Manin, you will pass through Campo San Luca and Campo San Bortolomio, popular spots where locals tend to meet up. From this last square we can quickly reach Rialto bridge. We cross the bridge just in time for lunch to refuel ourself at one of Casanova's favorite *osterie* – Le Poste Vecie 10 and Cantina Do Spade 11. Cantina Do Spade is a typical Venetian setting for an *ombra* and some *cicchetti* where you will also find an extract on the wall regarding Casanova in this very spot.

You will learn how in 1746 Casanova, then 21, was having fun with other seven friends during Carnival time. While they were out they noticed a beautiful woman with her husband and other two men. They pretended to be from the Council of Ten, a sort of State Inquisition; they arrested the men and brought them to the island of San Giorgio Maggiore, where they left them. In the meanwhile two of them stayed with the woman waiting for the other friends to come back. Once back they brought the distraught woman to Alle Spade and ate and drank with her. They then took her to a room of the upstairs inn. Here they all slept with her with the exception of Casanova's brother. According to Casanova's memoirs she left thanking them... We will never know the truth...

Another of his favourites was Caffè Florian in Saint Mark's square 12. Born in 1720 this *caffè* is probably the oldest in the world and has been visited by many artistic notables over the centuries. Due to the fact that it was also the only *caffè* to serve women during the 18th century it must have been Casanova's favourite... Here, surrounded by local history, we can enjoy the heavenly *cioccolata* which takes its name from the famous lover. On the opposite side of St Mark's square is Caffè Quadri 13 where Casanova spent a short employment as a violinist entertaining the crowds.

LUST IN MURANO'S CLOISTERS

Among his many lovers and stories the most infamous is his relationship with not one but two nuns from the convent of Santa Maria degli Angeli in Murano 14. First he had an affair with Caterina Capretta. She was his lover before becoming a nun. Casanova used to walk with her in the gardens on the Giudecca's island 15 and he made love to her here calling her his "wife". After her father sent her to the convent, Giacomo had to smuggle love letters to her to the convent via a courier in the confessionals of the Church of San Canzian 16. (There are pillars around San Canzian and confessionals on the right as you enter the church. Here Giacomo could exchange notes and provide food and clothing for pregnant Caterina).

It was during his visits to the convent that he met the second nun, referred to in his memoirs as M.M. to protect her identity but who we now know to have been Marina Morosini, Caterina's older friend. She was the French Ambassador's lover and came from a very noble family, hence the protection of her identity. His first private meeting with Marina took place in Campo San Giovanni e Paolo 17, the big ➤

Below, clockwise from top: Campo San Giovanni e Paolo; the convent of Santa Maria degli Angeli; Caffè Quadri in St Mark's Square, where Casanova was once employed as a violinist

CASANOVA'S VENICE

➤ PALAZZO MERATI
Where his mother and sisters lived and where Casanova stayed when he returned to Venice after receiving the grace. His alcove is still with his bed canopy is still here.

➤ MALIBRAN THEATRE
Once called San Giovanni Grisostomo, where he used to go to see the plays. In one of the nearby apartments on the ground floor owned by the Grimani family he lived for a period. Here he fell in love with a dancer from the theatre who lived in the same building, Margherita Giovanna Grisellini, known as *La Tintoretta*.

➤ CALLE DEL CARBON A SAN LUCA
Where he lived with his brother in a cheap room (1745).

➤ THE SEMINARY OF SAN CIPRIANO
Where he lived for a short while before being expelled and shortly afterwards imprisoned at the fortress of Sant'Andrea.

➤ I MAGAZZENI
The "large taverns" in Campo San Stefano e Sant'Angelo where with his musician friends he used to get drunk on *malvasia*.

➤ THE CAFFÈ IN CAMPIELLO SAN ZULIAN
Where he took part in public discussions with Zorzi.

➤ SAN ISEPPO
Today the Church of San Giuseppe. Near the church there used to be some gardens where Casanova once had a picnic with one of his lovers, Barbarina.

➤ CORTE DEL DUCA SFORZA
In the same courtyard where Teresa Imer lived, on the opposite side, there was Cattarina Capozzo Manzoni's house, a sort of second mother to Casanova. He entrusted all his important documents to her.

➤ FONDAMENTA DELLA MISERICORDIA
...in Cannaregio, where his lover Caterina Capretta lived.

➤ CAMPO SANTA SOFIA
Where Casanova and Caterina Capretta got off a gondola at dawn and parted after their first night of love.

➤ THE CONVENT OF SANTA GIUSTINA
Where Casanova visited the Countess Maria Theresa Coronini Cronberg, an elderly lady who knew all the gossip of Europe.

➤ FRANCESCO GURADI'S HOUSE
The painter was a friend of Casanova's brother and here they all dined together.

➤ PALAZZO GRIMANI
Michele Grimani is believed to have been Casanova's real father and looked after his after Gaetano's death.

CASANOVA'S VENICE

➤ CA' REZZONICO
If you want to understand Casanova's times, don't miss a visit to this museum of 18th-century Venice. The works have been arranged as if they were the palace's original furnishings. Admire valuable paintings, elegant furniture, frescoed salons and sumptuous boudoirs, plus an antique pharmacy complete with ceramic jars. By the entrance you can admire an old gondola with a *felze*, the cabin that the gondolas used to have. The *felze* was a perfect hiding place in such a libertine city, as it protected the passengers and clandestine lovers' trysts. The shutters on the *felze* of the cabin allowed even more intimacy and secrecy.

➤ CASANOVA MUSEUM
www.casanovamuseum.com
The state-of-the-art Casanova Museum in Cannaregio is a well-thought out interactive experience which immerses you in Casanova's world.

➤ PALAZZO MOCENIGO
mocenigo.visitmuve.it
Explore the luxury and elegance of 18th-century aristocratic Venetian life at Palazzo Mocenigo, with fine ceiling frescoes, costumes and accessories together with furniture and valuable artworks. The period atmosphere is recreated by mannequins dressed in precious period clothing. Learn about the evolution of fashion and the history of perfume.

➤ PONTE DELLE TETTE
The name of this small bridge means Bridge of Tits! It takes its name from the use of the bridge by the prostitutes who were encouraged to show their breasts on the windows to entice and convert homosexuals. Cross over the bridge to reach…

➤ RIO TERÀ DELLE CARAMPANE
…named after a noble family's house (Ca' Rampani), an area that became notorious for being a red light district.

➤ CALLE DE LE MOSCHETE
This *calle* is close to San Giovanni e Paolo in Barbaria de le Tole. *Moschete* literally means 'little flies' but it refers to something completely different. Here is where they used to produce and sell fake beauty spots. Venetian women loved to display fake spots on their faces and breasts and depending on where they were placed they had different meanings. For example, on the corner of the eye meant passion; near the mouth, voluptuousness.

square flanked by the great church that is a sort of doges' mausoleum and the monumental entrance of what was once the great Scuola di San Marco and nowadays is the grand entrance of the main hospital in Venice. Behind the equestrian statue of the famous mercenary Bartolomeo Colleoni in the middle of the square was the lovers' meeting point. As we learn from Casanova's story, on one cold night a two-oared gondola reached the shore and a man in a mask disembarked. Thinking it to be a trap, Casanova was about to flee before Marina removed the mask. From there they walked arm in arm in the direction of Piazza San Marco towards San Moisè, where Casanova had rented a magnificent casino for this special occasion. This encounter along with many others is described in great detail by Casanova's own hand in his book.

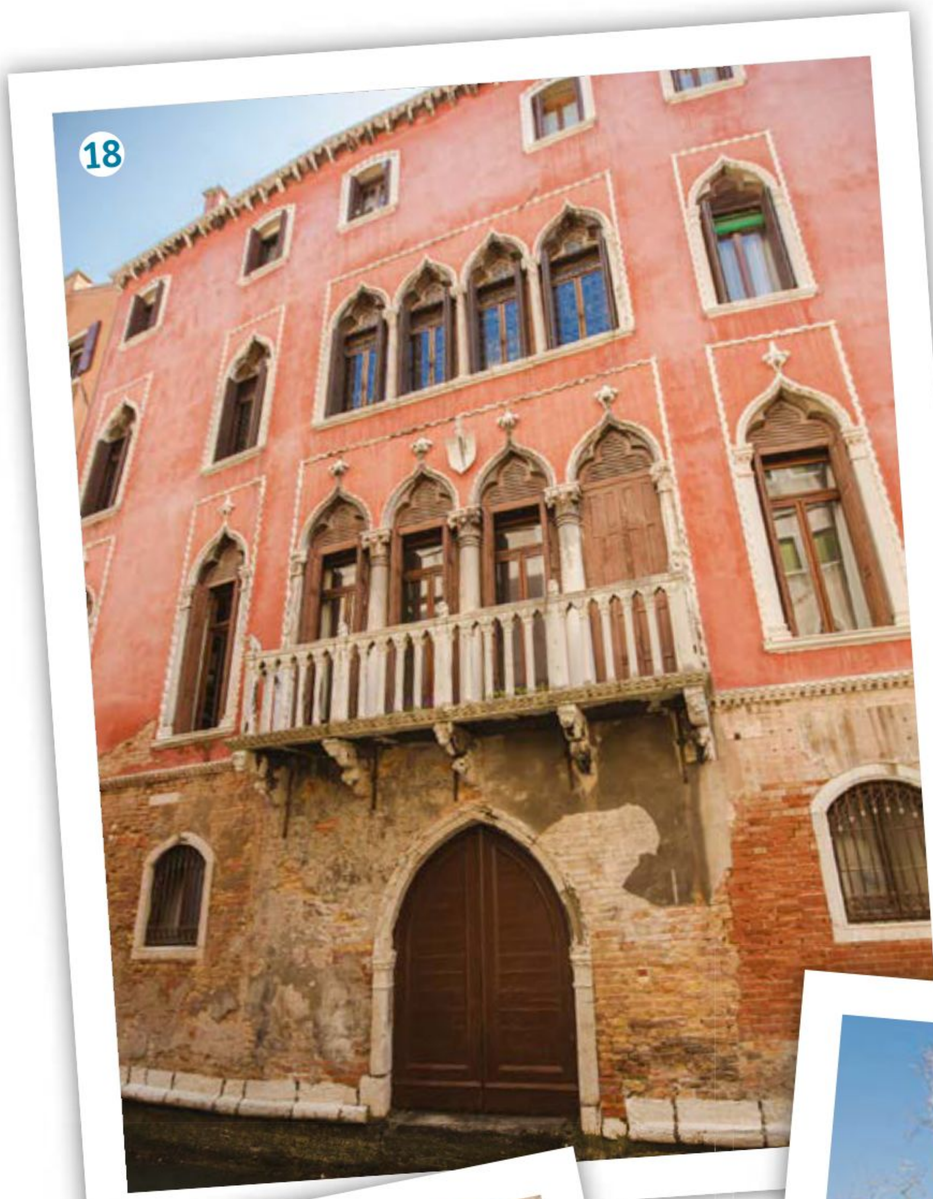
Not long after their affair blossomed there was a new twist… M.M.'s protector, de Bernis, the French Ambassador, was happy for the affair to continue if he could watch them making love through a peephole casino. His dream was obviously fulfilled….

CASANOVA'S HOUSES

Casanova never owned a house in Venice. However, having many lovers and many friends he lived in many different houses. He lived for the first years of his life in the already mentioned Calle Malipiero and Corte delle Muneghe.

Then, in his 20s, he lived for a while and came back numerous times to Palazzo Bragadin 18 (Castello 6041). Now a pretty hotel (Ca' Bragadin Carabba www.cabragadin.com), it used to be the palace where Casanova stayed as Bragadin's guest after saving the senator's life…

In 1746, just one year after he had played his trick with his friends on the unfortunate couple, Casanova was playing the violin for three consecutive days at a wedding party at Palazzo Soranzo in Campo San Polo 19. On the last day of the celebrations, when he left his orchestra to return home, he picked up a letter dropped by one of the guests, Senator Matteo Giovanni Bragadin. The gentleman insisted on taking him home to thank him. Three minutes later on the gondola the senator suffered what appeared to be a stroke. Casanova acted quickly. He got off at Calle Bernardo to get a surgeon who bled the senator on



For three years Casanova lived in Barbaria de le Tole in a house on the top floor with his lover Francesca Buschini

the gondola. Once arrived at the senator's Palazzo Bragadin di Santa Marina a doctor was summoned. He sought to cure the senator by applying a mercury poultice to his chest which was in fact killing him. Casanova audaciously removed the poultice without consulting with the doctor. Bragadin recovered, hailed him as his saviour and asked him to move to his palazzo. He then regularly consulted him as a special cabalist and adopted him as his son, providing him with accommodation, food, private servant, gondola and ten sequins a month. The young Casanova made in this way his entrance into society, changing his status from "the lowly state of violinist to that of gentleman" (VIII).

Later in his life he lived for three years in Barbaria de le Tole 20 in a house on the top floor with his lover Francesca Buschini. They lived together with Francesca's mother and brother and Casanova looked after all three of them before having to leave Venice once again. Finally, in 1755, the year he was arrested, he lived in Calle della Gorna 21 (today part of the public hospital).

CASANOVA THE GAMBLER

For all the freedom 18th century Venice provided there was an underlying unconscious structure in the typical Venetian day which is best described by the old saying "*messa, bisca e amante*" (Mass, gambling house and lover). Gambling was one of the favourite activities for the 18th-century Venetians, and a priority for Casanova. He made a fortune establishing a state lottery and he gambled throughout his adult life, winning and losing huge sums.

If we take a stroll not far from Saint Mark's square along Calle Larga XII Marzo (only a few minutes from the mentioned Palazzo Bellavite) we will find a busy *calle* with many luxury stores. Prada, Gucci, Hermès... This is the luxury shopping lovers' favourite spot! At the end of the *calle* stands the super elaborate Baroque façade of the church of San Moisè. If we walk past it and take the second *calle* on the right we will find the Hotel Monaco and Grand Canal 22, just opposite the famous Harris Bar. Here, in what today is part of the magnificent hotel, Casanova used to come and gamble – it was the famous Ridotto di S. Moisè. A remarkable restoration work has brought back to life the stunning beauty of the 18th-century rooms. The Camera Longa is the main room; it has a gallery with a balustrade and slender columns where the guests could chat while enjoying the food. Along the side walls of the room there were tables arranged for gambling and the walls used to be covered with gilded leathers. Nearby is the Stanza dei Sospiri (Room of Sighs) which probably takes its name from the sighs of the unlucky gamblers...

IMPRISONMENT AND ESCAPADES

Casanova was arrested twice. The first time in 1743 after his failed attempt to pursue his ecclesiastical career ➤

Opposite page, clockwise from top: Palazzo Bragadin, where Casanova was a welcome guest; Palazzo Sorano in Campo San Polo; the Ponte delle Tette. This page: The house in Barbaria de le Tole

Casanova walked calmly down the staircase of the Doge's Palace before escaping the city on a gondola

Above: the canal via which Casanova made his escape from Venice after absconding from the "Leads"; the island of Sant'Andrea, where Casanova had previously been imprisoned for four months

in the Seminario of San Cipriano in Murano. Because of his irreverent behaviour he was imprisoned for four months in the island of Sant'Andrea 23 just in front the church of San Nicolò on the Lido.

The second time he was arrested on 26 July 1755. Nearly 40 men arrived to the house he was staying at near San Giovanni e Paolo in Calle Luigi Torrelli to arrest him primarily for "public outrages against the holy religion". He was imprisoned in the Piombi 24, the terrible prisons under the roof of the Doge's Palace where he was condemned to stay for five years. *I Piombi*, the "Leads", were special prisons so named because they were located directly under the palace lead roof. Here it was freezing in the winter and extremely hot in the summer.

With two chapters dedicated to his escape in his *Histoire de Ma Vie* and a whole book, (*The Story of My Escape from the Prisons of the Republic of Venice called "The Leads"*), one senses Casanova took great joy in reliving the episode and may have ensured an embellishment or two for theatrical suspense. That said, his detailed escape across the roof and through a window does seem to stand up with administrative records of repairs to the route in the same year. A combined escape with Father Balbi, who was in an adjacent cell, saw them work their way onto the roof of the Doge's Palace, through a window which led them into a locked room, before attracting the attention of a guard they managed to convince they had been locked in the room overnight following a party, before finally walking calmly down the golden staircase and then the Giants' Staircase of the Doge's Palace and then escaping from the city on a gondola.

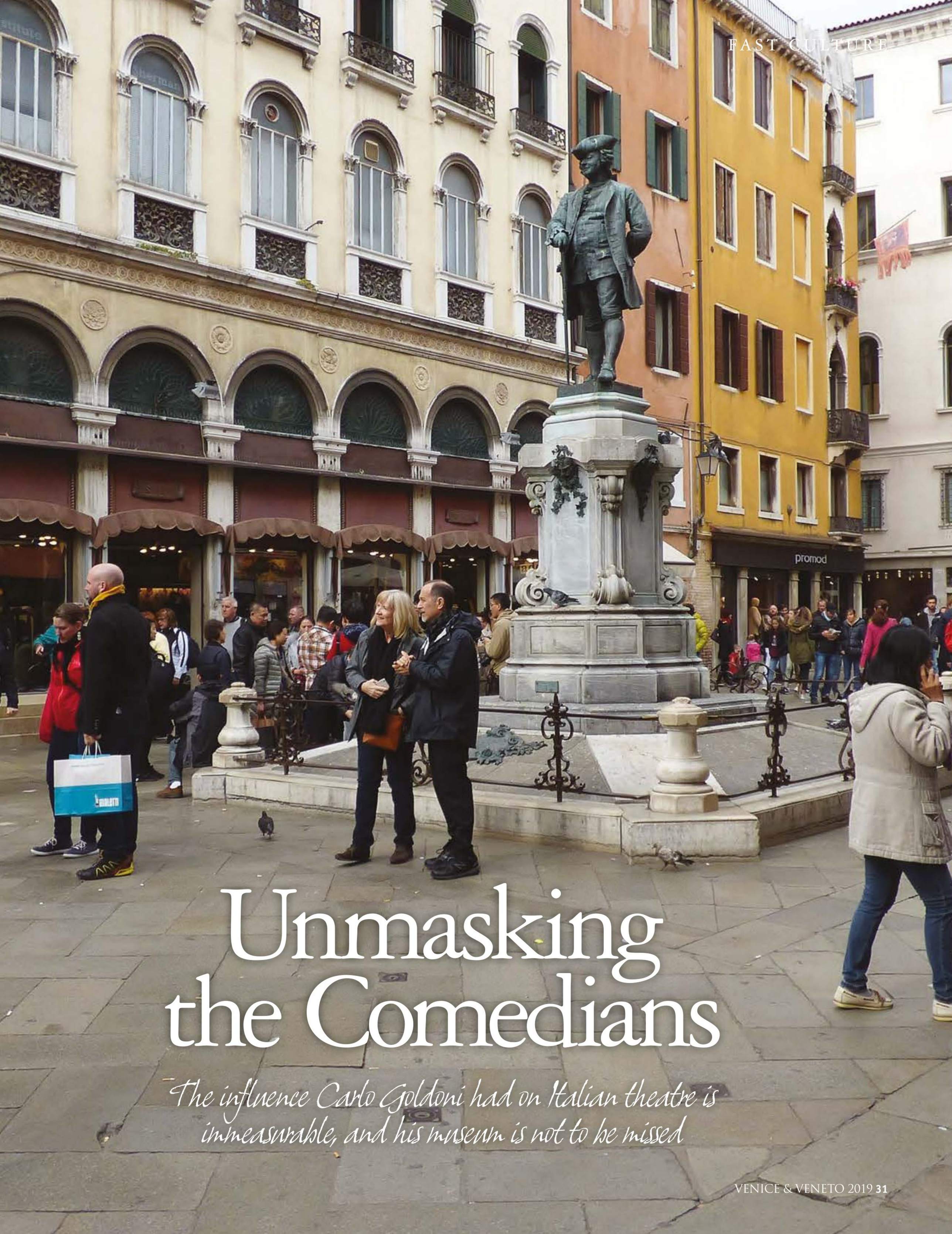
The Secret Itinerary Tour in the Doge's Palace will allow you to view both Casanova's cells. V

GETTING THERE

➤ BY PLANE

There are frequent flights to Venice Marco Polo Airport (www.veniceairport.it/en/) which is less than five miles north of the city on the other side of the lagoon, in Tessera; or to Treviso-Sant'Angelo (www.trevisoairport.it/en/), which is some 12 miles to the north of Venice, just west of Treviso.

Quotations from Casanova, Giacomo, *The Story of My Life*, © Penguin Classics, London, 2001



Unmasking the Comedians

The influence Carlo Goldoni had on Italian theatre is immeasurable, and his museum is not to be missed

The *palazzo* is hard to find. The land entrance is in an alley so narrow that you must consider the width of your umbrella before venturing there in the rain. The water entrance is easier to locate, on the tiny Rio de San Tomà canal in Venice, but you'll need a gondola. The ground floor is the *portego*, a traditional Venetian entry hall, with worn terracotta paving leading to an old, three-arched stone staircase. You feel the early 15th-century origins of the house here; but at the top of the stairs, at the *piano nobile*, you enter the 18th century, and the world of Italy's greatest comic playwright, Carlo Goldoni.

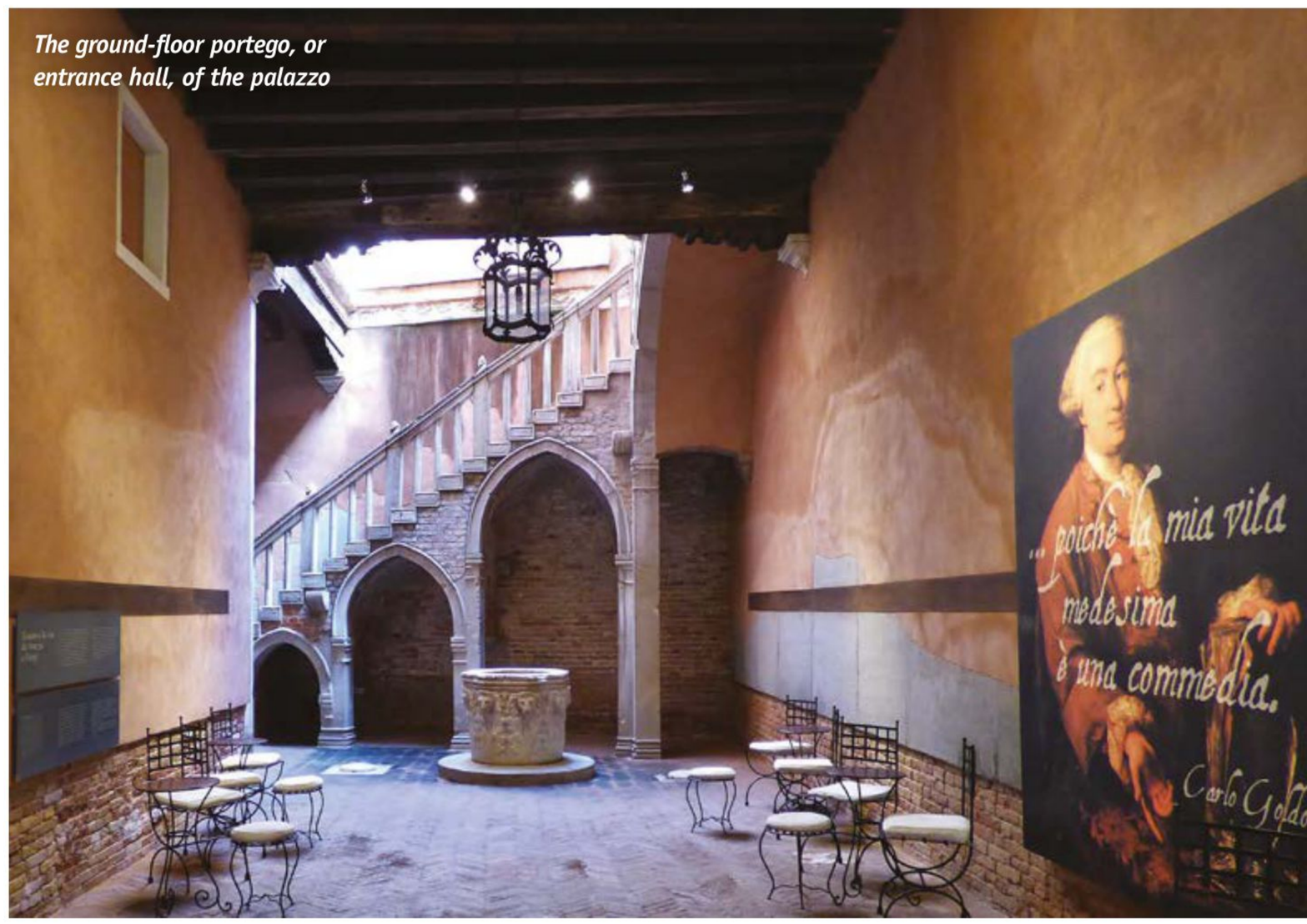
Goldoni was born here in 1707. In one room off the grand reception hall, there is the figure of a small child, fashioned perhaps from plaster. He stands just below the stage of a large puppet theatre, looking up at the figures in the limelight: Pantalone, Brighella, Truffaldino, Smeraldina, Il Dottore, and Clarice. They are all characters from Goldoni's most famous play, *Il Servitore di Due Padroni* – The Servant of Two Masters.

In his memoirs, written late in life, Goldoni says that when he was small, his father Giulio made a puppet theatre for him in this house, and inspired his lifelong passion for the stage. Some academics, perversely preferring fact over a good story, have questioned his recollection. Happily, the curators of the *Casa di Carlo Goldoni* museum installed this diorama anyway, (with a genuine 18th-century proscenium and antique puppets), citing the undoubted 'symbolic' truth it represents.

However indulgent he may have been, Carlo's father still insisted on a respectable career. Although Carlo was an unruly student who was expelled from school at least once, and on another occasion fled school with a troupe of itinerant actors, he finally took a law degree at Padua. His legal ability and geniality gained him success, and he even became the Genoese Consul in Venice.

But the theatre called and, at the age of twenty-seven, he jettisoned his career in law and joined the San Samuele Theatre in Venice, composing comic pieces. Before Goldoni's career changed everything (which it did), the two most popular genres of Italian theatre were *melodramma* and *Commedia dell'Arte*. *Melodramma*, (as distinct from the English word 'melodrama'), was musical drama – opera, in fact. *Commedia dell'Arte* performances were comedies using stock characters and unscripted, sketched-out plots, presented by actors skilled in improvisation. Many actors wore masks, which identified the character, or type of character, they represented. Goldoni, who was not a man to underestimate his talents, soon tired of sketching out the threadbare plots with which the actors were comfortable, and began to write fully scripted plays. Since they were consistently funnier than the sketch pieces,

The water entrance of the Carlo Goldoni Museum



The ground-floor portego, or entrance hall, of the palazzo

Il Giocatore – the Gambler vignette

Images by Patricia Gartman

The puppet theatre, with characters from The Servant of Two Masters

The luncheon table from the play Avenging Wrongs

Goldoni's statue in Campo San Bartolomeo

they became quite popular, to the chagrin of the improvisers. Then he took a shocking step: he suggested dispensing with the time-honoured masks of comedy as well!

In his memoirs, Goldoni identified what he called the four essential masks of Italian *Commedia*: "The basis of the comic humour is always Pantaloon, a Venetian merchant; the Doctor, a Bolognese jurisconsult (a legal expert); and Brighella and Harlequin, Bergamask valets." (*Bergamask* means "from Bergamo".)

Other characters, especially females, were not masked. Goldoni acknowledged the skill of the traditional players, but insisted: "The actor must in our days possess a soul; and the soul under a mask is like a fire under ashes. These were the reasons which induced me to endeavour the reform of the Italian theatre; and to supply the place of farces with comedies." And supply comedies he did: one hundred and thirty-seven comic plays, sixteen tragicomedies, *libretti* for forty-nine comic operas, and many more miscellaneous pieces. This astonishing output of brilliant work did indeed set Italian theatre on a new course: that of portraying peoples' lives and manners believably.

The delightful statue of Goldoni in Campo San Bartolomeo depicts a cheerful man-about-town, and his ability to acquire friends and patrons wherever he went attests to his affability. He was persuaded to move to Paris in 1762, to manage the *Théâtre Italien*. When that job proved uncongenial, he somehow became the Italian tutor to Marie Adélaïde, daughter of Louis XV, at Versailles; and when he lost the sight of his left eye, he was given a royal pension. The late 18th century, however, was not the best of times to be a client of the royal family of France. The French revolution ended his pension, and he died nearly penniless in 1793. Even after death, though, he found an unexpected friend. The poet André Chénier convinced the revolutionary convention to restore Goldoni's pension to his wife of many years: "She is old," pleaded Chénier, "and her husband has left her no heritage save his illustrious name, his virtues, and his poverty."

Part of Goldoni's heritage to us is preserved in the small, charming *palazzo* down a narrow alley along the Rio de San Tomà canal in Venice. His plays are there, too: maskless, featureless mannequins form ghostly vignettes of famous scenes. If you love theatre, it's worth the search, even in the rain. Ⓥ

Find out more at carlogoldoni.visitmuve.it

ABOUT THE WRITER

JOE GARTMAN writes about travel, history and culture, and divides his time between the southwest US and Europe. Learn more at www.joegartman.com

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ARTISANS OF VENICE

Step away from the crowds to discover **a world of creativity** in the heart of Venice and a newly restored palazzo upholding the traditions of the past

Murano glass vials from The Merchant of Venice

Edible gold leaf from Battiloro

Image © Berta Battiloro

Gloria the hand weaver at Tessitura Bevilacqua

There used to be sixty weavers here but now there are only five… plus an apprentice," explained Gloria, flinging the hefty shuttle on her antique wooden Jacquard loom from side to side. She was demonstrating with quite athletic dexterity the painstaking production of *soprarizzo* velvet at Tessitura Bevilacqua, the centuries-old Venetian hand-weaving company whose reputation for creating the best silk velvets in the world has gained them high profile customers such as the White House and the Kremlin, as well as some of the most iconic couturiers and fashion brands of our time. To explain: *soprarizzo* means 'over the curl', the method of cut and loop pile velvet that is the signature textile of Tessitura Bevilacqua.

The frontage of their workshop in Santa Croce is unassuming – we walked right past it – but it opens out to a vast, low-ceilinged space crammed with 18th-century wooden looms, shelving stacked high with colourful raw silks, yarns and punched paper patterns concertinaed in piles. The exquisite velvet fabric advances a scant few inches every day with the pile hand cut according to those original 19th-century Jacquard paper patterns, and the physical effort required from these devoted hand-weavers is prodigious.

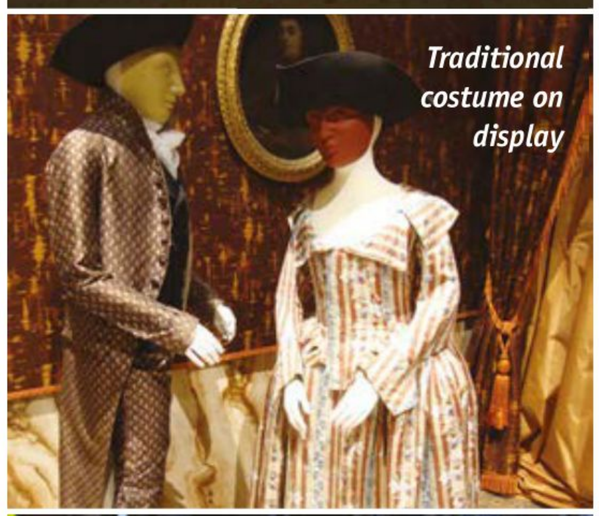
CREATIVE HUB

Acknowledging its location in the waters of the lagoon as a trading hub for all the shipping and routes from the east to the west, Venice has always been a meeting point for different cultures and traditions: much trade passed through the city and on to other destinations, but elements would remain to enrich and diversify its creativity.

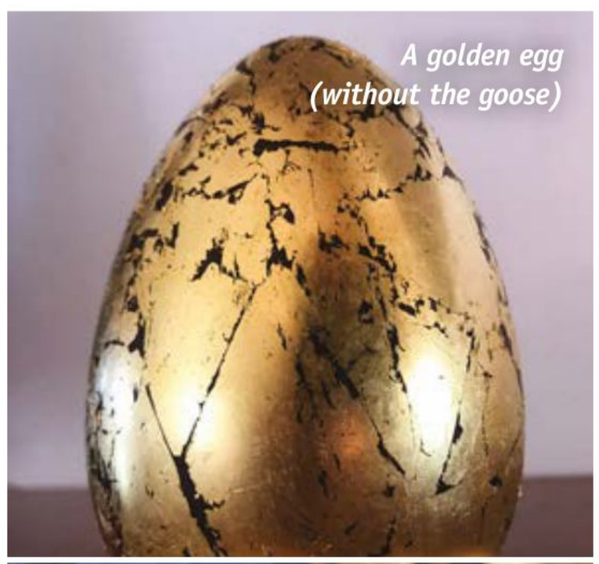
The awesome glass-making skills of the Murano craftsmen, and the delicate artistry of Burano's lace-makers are better known than other crafts perhaps, but in quiet quarters scattered right through the city this creativity is alive and well. You'll need to delve deeper below the easy charms of the mass-tourism infrastructure, but these ➤

Photography by Amanda Robinson unless otherwise stated

Impressive antique Murano glass chandelier


Traditional costume on display

Merchant of Venice at Marco Polo airport


A golden egg (without the goose)

Preparing the precious metal

The golden cross at Lourdes

Ancient methods at Palazzo Mocenigo

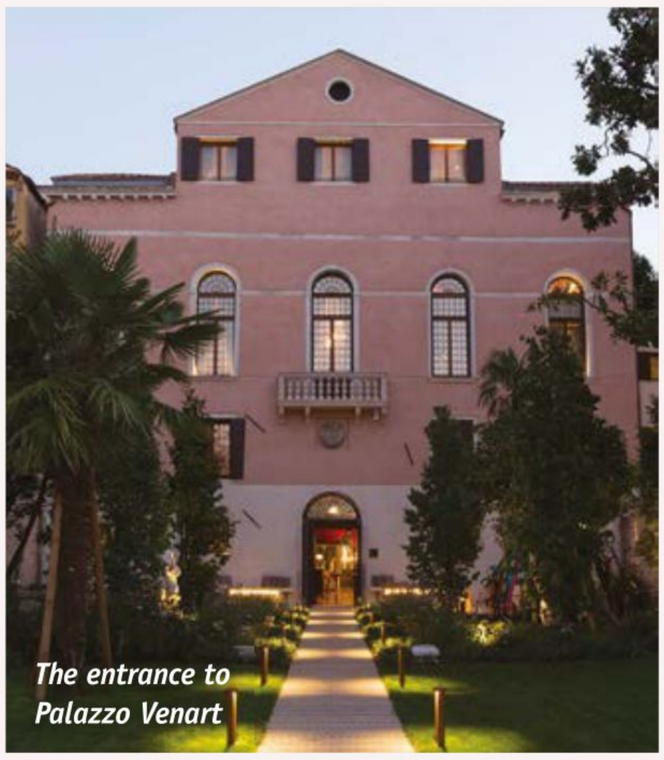
Exploring the history of perfume

Gilded interior décor

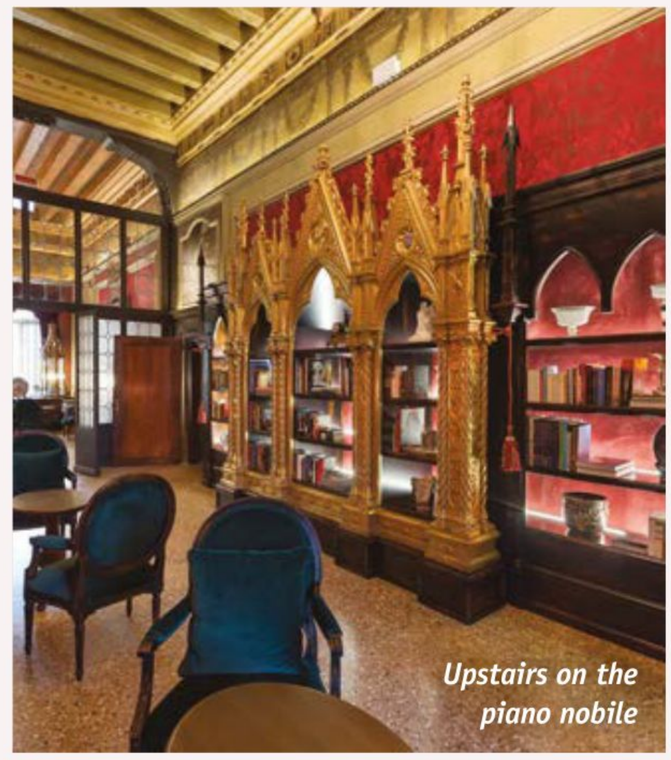
These five images © Berta Battiloro

Gold leaf expert at work

PARADISE RESTORED ON THE GRAND CANAL


The entrance to Palazzo Venart

The atrium is flooded with light


Upstairs on the piano nobile

Whether it's on the busy *vaporetto* from Marco Polo airport or a private taxi arriving in Venice by water (which of course is the only way to fully appreciate this glorious city), it is the faded grandeur of the *palazzi* suspended on the waterline that sets the scene. What memories are etched into these crumbling stones; the tales these buildings could tell…

But behind one particular façade along the Grand Canal a dilapidated building has been brought back to life on a grand scale. The Palazzo Bacchini delle Palme, as it was known for hundreds of years, reopened its doors as Palazzo Venart luxury hotel in August 2016. Neglected and abandoned for the past fifty years, the entire building has been faithfully restored to its former glory.

Taking two years to complete, with renovations meticulously overseen by Venetian art historians and curators, faded frescoes have been restored to their original vibrant colour palettes by local artisans, with authentic Venetian textiles, chandeliers, silks and brocades sourced to furnish the interiors of this elegant *palazzo*.

History is all around you in this grand place: all 18 bedrooms and suites are named after notable people who have a link with Venice, like Robert Browning, Marco Polo, Titian, and interestingly, Christine de Pizan, who lived in the second half of the 14th century. Though not perhaps as well known as some, she was an intellectual and considered to be one of the earliest feminists. Needless to say, the rooms are gracious and generously proportioned, and have every comfort for the modern traveller, although the views over the Grand Canal offered by some of the premium suites are worth more than money can buy.

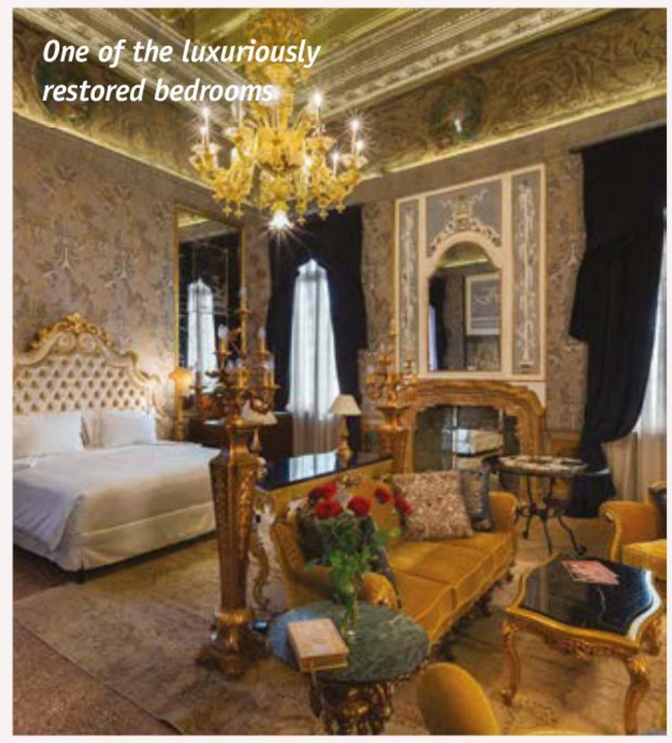
Tucked away in a quiet corner overlooking the Grand Canal, the *vaporetto* stop of San Stae is only two minutes' walk away from Palazzo Venart; and Rialto Bridge, with all its bustle and energy, is only a ten-minute stroll, so you are well situated to explore the wonders of Venice, with a relaxing place to return to at the end of the day. Unusually for the city, where green space is a rarity, Palazzo Venart has a beautifully tranquil garden to relax in, fronting the water's edge, often with pieces of contemporary art sitting alongside the ancient brickwork. In the summer months this is the place to enjoy an al fresco supper from the palace's two-Michelin-starred GLAM restaurant. Chef Enrico Bartolini's growing reputation attracts visitors and locals alike with his inspired tasting menus and interpretation of traditional Venetian dishes.

Front of house is the domain of charming general manager Angelo Rizzi, formerly of the Dorchester Principe di Savoia in Milan and Grand Hotel Villa d'Este on Lake Como. Nothing is too much trouble for Angelo and his team, who will ensure that your stay with them is as memorable as your surroundings.

www.palazzovenart.com

Chef Enrico Bartolini

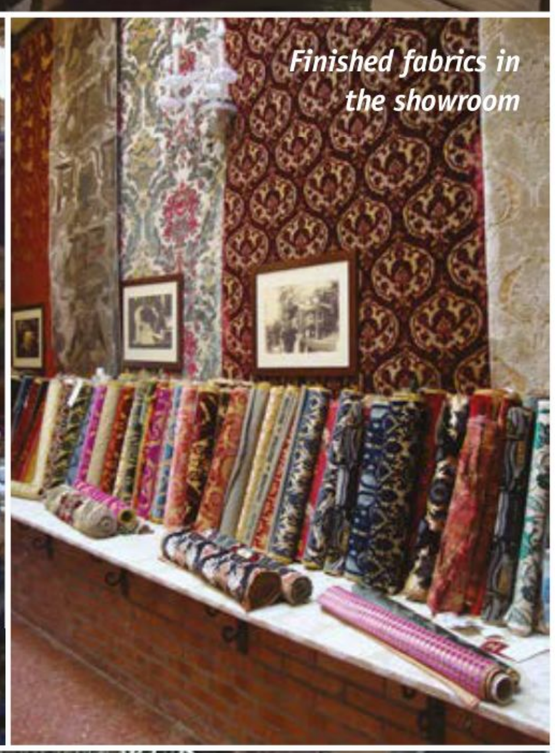
Michelin-starred food from GLAM restaurant


One of the luxuriously restored bedrooms

Images © Palazzo Venart

Soprarizzo brocade on the loom

Fine Italian silks for the weavers


Finished fabrics in the showroom

Simple manual loom mechanism

Outside Punta della Dogana gallery

Always time for a coffee

View from Punta della Dogana

independent businesses are holding their own and deserve our support when we next spend time in Venice.

HEAVEN SCENTS

Just round the corner from Palazzo Venart (see left) is Palazzo Mocenigo (see right), a fascinating centre for those interested in less well-known aspects of Venetian history. This rather glorious palace is a study centre for the history of Venetian Textile and Costumes, and now also houses eight new rooms dedicated to the history of Venetian Perfumery Art. Alongside this, the Merchant of Venice perfume house has revived old Venetian fragrance traditions based on the *mude*, the ancient Venetian trade routes. Visit their shops to take some of these classic scents home with you and find out more about the history behind them with a tour around Palazzo Mocenigo, or even a perfume workshop, where you can learn more about how classic fragrances are created.

On the other side of the Grand Canal is the charming quarter of Cannaregio, where another family company, Berta Battiloro, manufactures gold and silver leaf (as well as other precious metals), reviving the traditions of previous generations. These delicate metallic sheets gild all manner of products from artistic creations and cosmetics to food, as some of this fine metallic leaf is edible!

One of the most iconic souvenirs you'll see in Venice is the mask, of course, but if you are looking for something of superior quality, step away from the mass-produced imported versions you'll find piled high on stalls around the Rialto Bridge and head south to the Dorsoduro quarter, where Ca' Macana, one of the oldest mask making workshops in Venice, is situated. They craft their masks by hand, as the artisans did 800 years ago, and if you wanted to try your hand at this ancient art, they run regular mask workshops.

Just a few the local artisans of Venice: maybe you know others? We need to support them to ensure that their vibrant creativity survives for the next generations too. V

ARTISANS IN VENICE

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☎ +39 041 721566
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This workshop follows Venice's most ancient fabric traditions using original 18th-century looms to create luxury textiles.

PALAZZO MOCENIGO
Santa Croce, 1992
☎ +39 041 721798
mocenigo.visitmuve.it
A 17th-century palace crammed with delights. The Merchant of Venice Perfume Museum is housed here along with the Museum of the History of Textile and Costumes. Tickets €8, €5.50 concessions.

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE
Via Altinia, 298/B
☎ +39 041 541 7771
www.themerchantofvenice.com
The Perfume Museum is housed at Palazzo Mocenigo. There's also a dedicated perfume study centre and multimedia lab which offers fragrances courses. Book separately from entry to Palazzo Mocenigo.

BERTA BATTILORO
Calle Magazzen, 5182 – Cannaregio
☎ +39 041 522 2802
www.berta-battiloro.com
Handcrafting gold leaf for modern applications using traditional techniques.

CA' MACANA
Sestiere Dorsoduro, 3172
☎ +39 041 277 6142 / 041 520 3229
www.camacana.com
Following traditional techniques, enjoy a Venetian mask-making course or buy ready-made to take home from the shop.

WHERE TO STAY

➤ PALAZZO VENART
Calle Tron 1961, San Stae, Santa Croce
☎ +39 041 523 3784
www.palazzovenart.com
The hotel opens in March and closes in November. Rooms from around £330 per night, check website for latest prices.

GETTING THERE

➤ VENICE MARCO POLO AIRPORT
Private transfers can be arranged to take you to the waterfront entrance of Palazzo Venart. The Alilaguna Linea Arancia (Orange Line) waterbus from Marco Polo stops at San Stae, just round the corner from Palazzo Venart. About €15 one way. www.alilaguna.it

FLORIAN
Florian
Florian

CAFFÈ FLORIAN

Located in the **Piazza San Marco** in Venice, the prestigious Caffè Florian is the oldest coffee house in Italy, and has attracted a particularly high calibre of guests over the years

This orchestra, playing al fresco in time-honoured Italian tradition, is part of the expected luxury of Caffè Florian. Opening in 1720, it is the oldest coffee house in continuous operation – with its closest competitor being Antico Caffè Greco in Rome, which was established in 1760. The elegant Venetian surroundings have historically made Caffè Florian a honeypot for notable artists, including the playwright Carlo Goldoni, and later Marcel Proust, Lord Byron and Charles Dickens. Due to its reputation as the only coffee house in the 18th century that allowed women, Casanova also sits among its famous alumni. In keeping with its unconventional attributes, Caffè Florian was one of the few places that distributed Count Gozzi Gasparo's *La Gazzetta Veneta* – an important political periodical that ran from 1760-61. This publication brought the journalistic styles of Joseph Addison and Richard Steele to Italy, and was intended to emulate the success enjoyed by *The Spectator* in England. V

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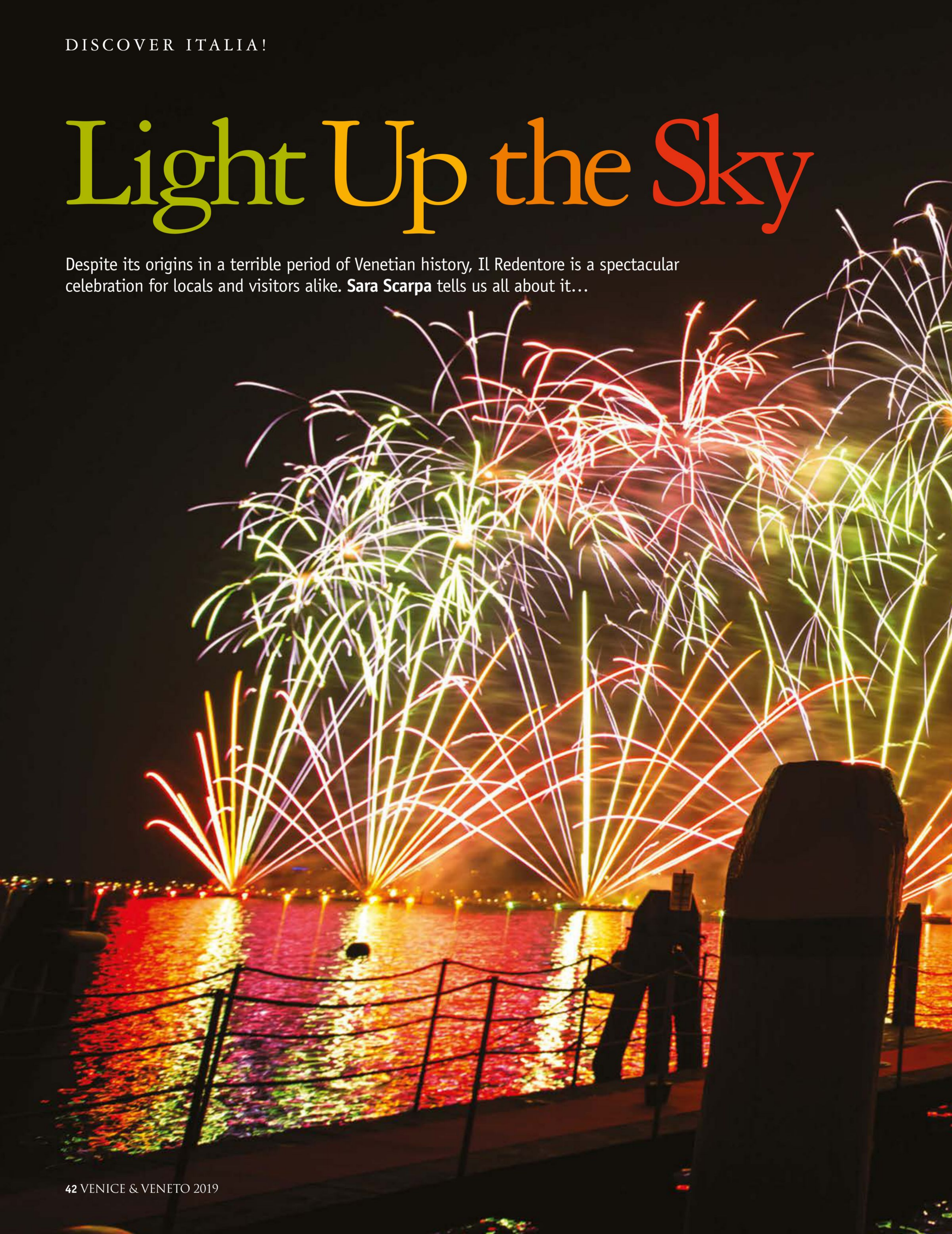
Light Up the Sky

Despite its origins in a terrible period of Venetian history, Il Redentore is a spectacular celebration for locals and visitors alike. **Sara Scarpa** tells us all about it…



Images by Iain Reid unless otherwise stated

Every summer thousands of people wait impatiently for this event. The Festa del Redentore (the Feast of the Redeemer) is a celebration the Venetians are particularly fond of

Most years, on the afternoon of the third Saturday of July, my friends and I prepare for a fantastic event. We set up coloured balloons and paper lanterns on a friend's wide, flat boat, which is normally used to transport fruit and vegetables. Certainly, it does not sound like an exciting "venue" for a party, but for me, my family, and friends it truly is magical. It is tradition for us Venetians, on this day, to decorate our boat and, as a duty, we must do this in order to keep our tradition alive. The boats, all originally used to transport goods, are just perfect for this occasion as here you can comfortably fit many friends, and sometimes even a temporary dinner table.

Every summer thousands of people wait impatiently for this event. The Festa del Redentore (the Feast of the Redeemer) is a celebration the Venetians are particularly fond of. Ever since I was a child, I have looked forward to this event and even now, despite living in London, I always try to make sure my holiday will coincide with this celebration. On the boat, we are always surrounded by cool-bags filled with food and drinks – and lots of it. Everyone has a task: the women prepare *sarde in saor*, *bigoli in salsa* (a pasta dish made with onion and anchovies) and *tiramisù*; and the men fill the bags with Aperol, wine and prosecco. All the food is usually homemade, following closely guarded recipes.

It is important to get everything ready and everybody on board before it is too late. You have to reach the closest spot to the Giudecca and the Punta della Dogana – where the fireworks' platform is located – if you want to get the best vantage point to enjoy the show. Likewise, even if you are joining the party on an island it is highly recommended to get there early and pack a big Italian picnic. Every year the same scene repeats itself: boats of different shapes and sizes try to get as close as possible to the temporary pontoon bridge which connects the Zattere with the Chiesa del Redentore on the Giudecca island. Hundreds of boats gather in a flotilla of picnics and happiness!

THE ORIGINS OF IL REDENTORE

View of the Lazzaretto Vecchio from the Lido

Although today it is chiefly known for its association with the joyous celebration of Il Redentore, the origins of the Chiesa del Redentore are linked to a terrible event: the plague of 1576. The outbreak killed a third of the city's population (around fifty thousand people), amongst them, most likely, Titian. The two Lazzaretti, il Lazzaretto Nuovo and il Vecchio, were built to receive people affected by the plague but became so crowded that more people had to be put on boats moored beside them. (The Lazzaretti can be visited with guided tours at weekends from April to October. Please check the website for details – www.lazzarettonuovo.com)

The Church of the Redeemer was built by order of the Senate of the Serenissima as a votive temple consecrated to Christ the Redeemer after the cessation of the plague. Commencing in 1577, the project was begun by Andrea Palladio and continued after his death in 1580 until its completion in 1592 under the supervision of Antonio da Ponte (the architect of the Rialto bridge). It was consecrated by Lorenzo Priuli, Patriarch of Venice, under Doge Pasquale Cicogna.

Thereafter, every year, the Doge and the Senate walked across a temporary bridge made of boats connecting the Zattere to the Giudecca in order to attend Mass, in gratitude to the Redeemer for their salvation from the plague. Even today, every year, thousands of people walk across a temporary pontoon bridge to attend Holy Mass and pay homage to the Redeemer.

The view from above

Crossing the bridge on the Feast of the Redeemer

Left: ***La Festa Del Redentore, Venice*** **by Louis Abel-Truchet**

The pontoon connecting the Zattere to the Giudecca

Images of Lazzaretto Vecchio by Chris 73 / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=7383133

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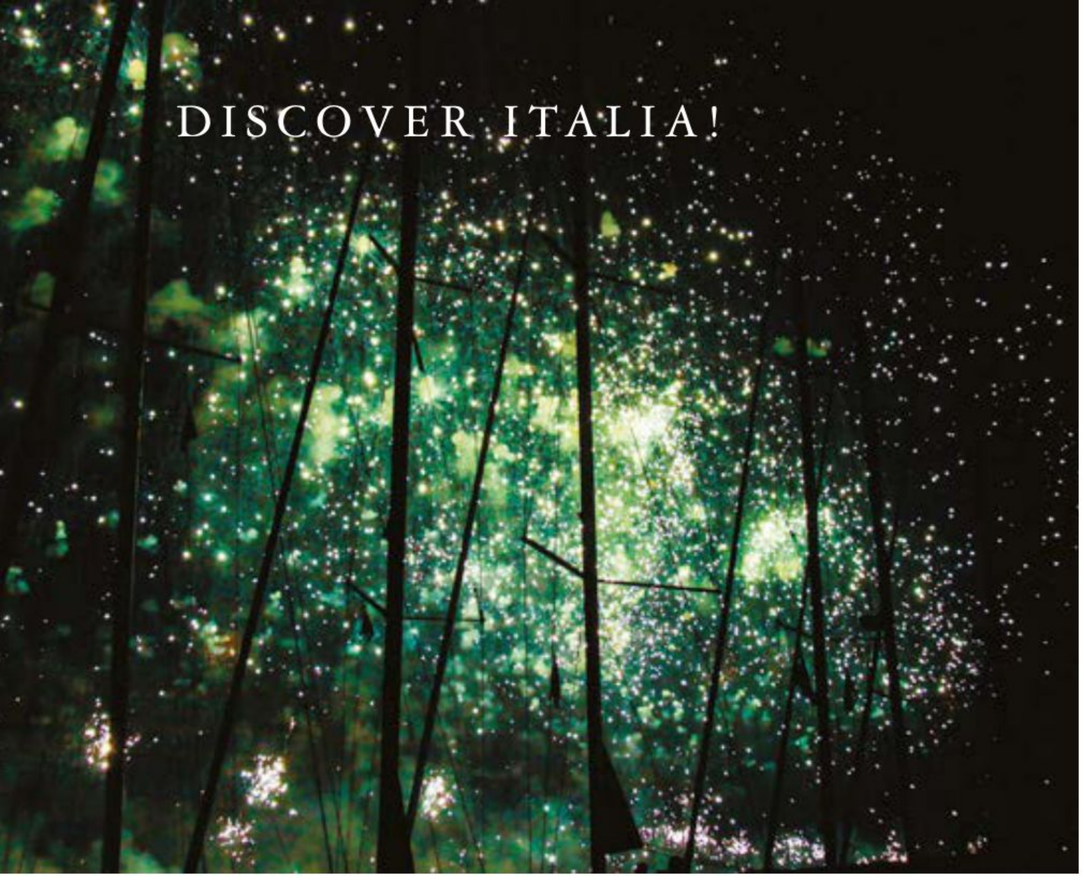


Some years, if I was not on a boat, I watched the fireworks from the *riva* (embankment) on the Giudecca, which is also a great location. The Riva degli Schiavoni, San Marco and the Zattere all good. But if you want a place on the embankment you have to get there early in the morning and bring your table. Some young people just bring towels or anything to mark their space on the pavement. In the evening it gets extremely crowded, so much so, that it is almost impossible to walk from one spot to the other. At 11.30pm the awaited show starts. The fireworks last for about forty minutes and are set against an enchanting background. The Venetian lagoon, the Bacino di San Marco with the Doges' Palace and the Piazzetta, the two Palladian churches (San Giorgio and the Redentore) and the Punta della Dogana are all dreamy backdrops for the fireworks. Their shimmering reflections on the dark waters of the lagoon compose an incredible picture. In front of this enchanting set, everybody, from kids to adults, visitors to Venetians, is mesmerised. You really need to be there; the beauty is almost impossible to describe with words and even though I have seen it many times, every time for me is an incredible experience.

If you have managed to get really close to the fireworks platform you will not only see the show, you will feel it as well. Many pieces of ashes from the exploded rockets will drift down towards your face while you are looking up. During those forty minutes the fireworks just get better and better until the last few minutes of the grand finale when the sky is completely filled with colour and Venice seems to be on fire.

Three loud bangs close the fireworks display and open everybody's topic for conversation for the next few days – how good the fireworks have been, or how much better they have been compared to those of previous years. After the fireworks display, young people usually go to the Lido for a nocturnal swim and wait for the sunrise. If you go to the beach the following morning you will see some young people still sleeping on deckchairs. You might also find the remains of the watermelons that they had buried under the wet sand to keep them cool for their snack at sunrise and, more often, quite a few empty bottles of prosecco lying around on the sand…

THE BEST FOOD

Venetians always eat a lot, but especially on this particular night! The anticipation for the celebration is so great that the preparation starts a few days before – and it has to, for the typical dish is *sarde in saor*. The fried fresh sardine fillets topped with sliced white onions, raisins and pine nuts need to stand in vinegar at least for a couple of days in order to take on flavour. This dish is a perfect combination of sweet and sour, and even more perfect for this occasion as it is to be served cold. The vinegar, which has been used for centuries by the fishermen from Veneto to best preserve their catch, keeps them fresh for many days to come – if there are any left, of course!

Young and old, visitors and locals, all come together for the Festa del Redentore

The fireworks just get better and better until the last few minutes of the grand finale when the sky is completely filled with colour and Venice seems to be on fire

THE BEST VIEW

You can enjoy the fireworks display from almost anywhere in Venice, but for me the best spot is sitting on a decorated boat near the Giudecca. The embankments – Riva degli Schiavoni, Zattere and Giudecca – and San Marco are great as well. There are also organised boat parties and gondola tours if you make a reservation in advance.

If you fancy a real luxury experience you could opt for a dinner on the terrace of the Restaurant Terrazza Danieli, that of the Molino Stucky Hilton or the Club del Doge Restaurant at the Gritti Palace Hotel. The latter also offers a real VIP treat if you can afford it: the Terrazza Redentore Suite is a fantastic two-storey suite with a private 250sqm rooftop terrace and jacuzzi offering a breathtaking view over the Canal Grande and the stunning church of the Santa Maria della Salute.

But for those who did not opt to stay up all night, the Sunday morning starts with an early Mass in the Church of the Redeemer, followed by the traditional colourful regatta. This show, with the eating and drinking together al fresco in a communal space, again maintains tradition and is one of the things that keeps Venice alive and real.

This is the true Venice and not the *nature morte* and the Disneyland caricature that is often portrayed to tourists. When I was a child, there used to be so many boats that the lagoon between Saint Mark's basin, Punta della Dogana and the Giudecca was completely covered and you could almost have walked from one side to the other just by stepping from one boat to the next. Today it is a different scene and many of the typical Venetian boats have been replaced by larger, anonymous boats with no decorations. Fortunately, however, many Venetians still resist. Fingers crossed the Redentore will never come to an end and people will continue to decorate their boats with pretty coloured paper lanterns for everyone to enjoy while they sit together eating and chatting and watching the show for many years to come! V

Boats should be colourfully decorated – somersaulting into the water is optional

Images left and far right by Jean-Pierre Dalbéra from Paris, France – La fête du Rédempteur (Venise), CC BY 2.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=24672515

A Jewel in the Crown

La Scuola Grande di San Rocco, and Tintoretto's work in it, is an experience that could only be found in Venice.

THE CONFRATERNITY OF SAINT ROCH is an all-encompassing Venetian experience. Both the structure of the organisation and the building's decoration are entirely Venetian. This confraternity was one of the most important of its kind in Venice. It was one of the six *scuole grandi* (major confraternities) in the Venetian Republic.

Scuola was the name given to this type of social structure. In the 1500s there were six of them called *scuole maggiori* and over one hundred *scuole minori* and they played an extremely important role in the social fabric of the city.

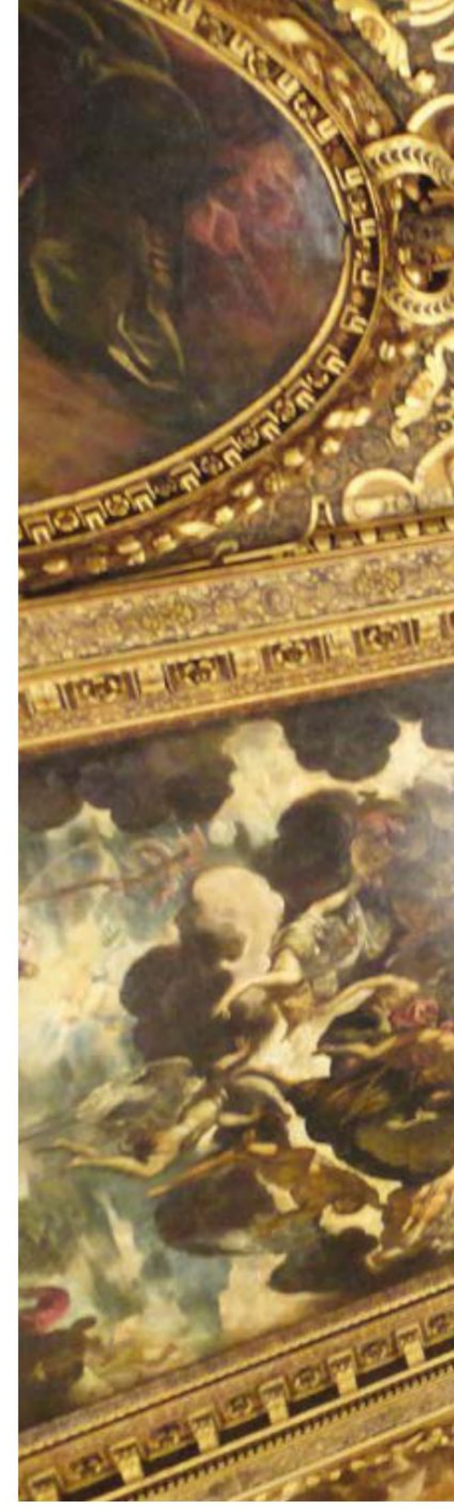
They were composed of lay men mostly outside the patrician class, and they served many aspects of society; they were a safety net for the members (providing for widows of deceased members, dowries for girls, etc), they conducted acts of charity in the city (helping the sick and poverty-stricken), and they participated in and funded important state processions of public display.

The major *scuole* had magnificent digs and they were in competition with one another for the greatest display; they each poured large amounts of money into making their own headquarters a rich and sumptuous environment. The confraternity dedicated to Saint Roch was founded in the late 1400s and initially housed meetings in existing churches and halls in Venice. In the early 1500s however, after securing land behind the great Franciscan church dubbed *I Frari*, they began the construction of their own building.

Architecturally, all the *scuole* follow the same plan. The ground floor is composed of a large hall (*sala terra*) and to one side a staircase led to the upper floor where there was another large room (*sala superiore*) for meetings, along with some smaller rooms off the side, the most important being the *sala d'albergo*, the room for the meetings of the treasury (the Banca and Zonta).

In the middle of the 1500s, the members of Saint Roch announced that they were looking for an artist to decorate the *sala d'albergo* on the first floor. A group of renowned local artists, Paolo Veronese being one of them, submitted a sketch to be judged by

The Adoration of the Shepherds, Tintoretto, 1578-81



The walls and ceilings are covered in paintings of scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary

Nowhere else in Italy is there such a celebration of one man's work

the confraternity committee. Jacopo Robusti, called Tintoretto (it translates as 'little dyer' because his father had been a dyer of silk) didn't just submit a sketch of Saint Roch in Glory, the theme requested by the committee, he actually executed the entire painting. Moreover, for a true *coup de théâtre*, he installed it in the place where the painting was to go, in the central panel of the ceiling.

The 'little dyer' won the commission and spent the next few years decorating the walls and the ceilings with his paintings of scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary. Shortly afterwards, he was commissioned to decorate the *sala superiore* with the Old Testament and finally, the *sala terra* with the Passion of Christ. All in all, he completed over 55 paintings and the entire *scuola* is a stunning testimony to this great Venetian master.

Rare is a space so overwhelmed by the aura and spirit of one soul – maybe the Old Sacristy in Florence is comparable, where the sculpture and architecture are entirely the product of Michelangelo, but it that is much smaller.

Tintoretto painted with a vigour and velocity of brush stroke that enlivens his works with movement and action. Criticised by the Florentine school for lacking in *disegno*, or form and composition, Tintoretto worked often without sketches and directly onto the canvas. However, it is precisely his loose brush strokes and lack of sharp contours that gives the protagonists in his scenes their own pulse and we, as spectators, become easily involved in the great event played out on the flat surface.

His figures often perform spatial gymnastics for greater theatricality. In fact he would often create boxes filled with wax figurines in the composition he planned to paint, in order to perfect the often complex positions. He makes us view the action from an extravagant viewpoint; sometimes from below, almost underneath the scene, or, from an extreme side angle. Tintoretto's paintings are an explosion of creativity, of complexity of form and great virtuosity of light and colour. He captivates his audiences with his devotion to the moment and drama. The Scuola di San Rocco is a jewel in the crown of the City of Venice, the Queen of the Adriatic. Ⓥ

www.scuolagrandesanrocco.org

ABOUT THE WRITER

FREYA MIDDLETON is a private tour guide and writer who lives in Florence, Tuscany. You can read her blog online or learn more about her tours at www.freyasflorence.com

Photography by Freya Middleton

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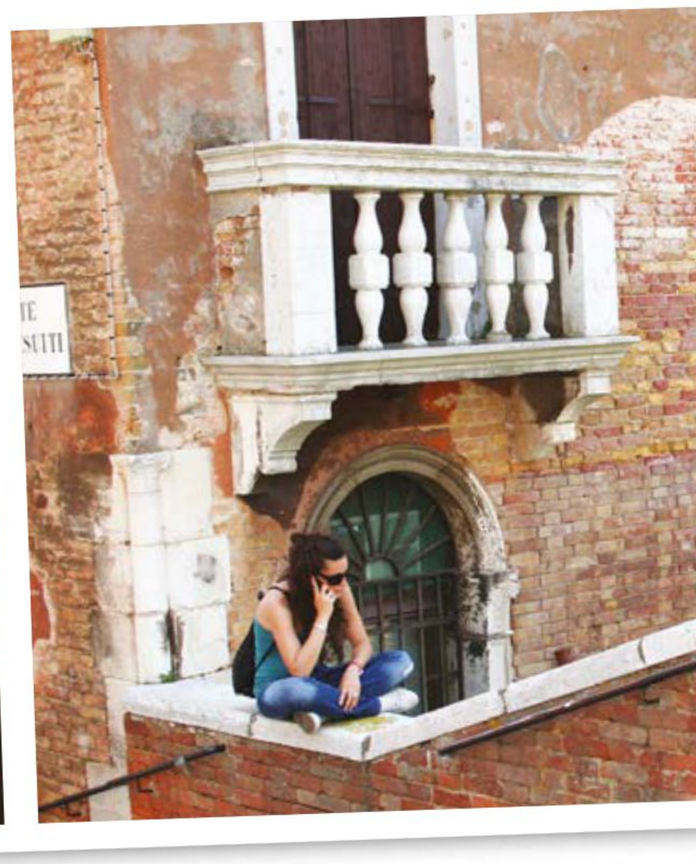
VENICE *light and dark*

Decaying, flood-prone, overcrowded and expensive, Venice still manages to be the world's most beautiful city. Perhaps even lovelier in gloom than sun, this is the capital of paradoxes, says **Fleur Kinson**

Photography by Fleur Kinson and Daniel Hart



Coming in to land, the aeroplane window frames views of a sodden, misty-grey landscape that fragments into the Adriatic Sea. It's a world half land and half water, the boundaries between the two elements blurred. Sinking lower through the November sky, wheels clunking out from their sockets in readiness, the wide lagoon around the island of Venice grows distinct. You can trace the sinuous lines of its underwater channels and shallows – the wayward wriggles that put this extraordinary city here in the first place.

Venice came into being when people living round the shores of the lagoon needed to escape Attila the Hun. His murderous tribes swept down through Italy in the 5th and 6th centuries, forcing locals to seek refuge wherever they could. The labyrinthine water-channels of the lagoon proved a perfect protection, as it was impossible to navigate a boat safely through their shallows and sand-traps unless you knew them as intimately as the local people. Far out in the lagoon on the remote islets and mudflats which only they knew how to reach, living off fish and rainwater and seaweed, the early Venetians established their amphibious society. They drove wooden posts into the silt to create more land, and began fashioning streets out of water. From this strange and unpromising arrangement, they founded an island city that would become for a thousand years the world's greatest trading state. And later one of its most-loved tourist destinations.

NIGHT VISITOR

From the airport, I take a water taxi to my hotel, sitting outside in the cold, sea-smelling air and clinging on for dear life as we bounce across the wakes of fast oncoming boats. A full moon hangs like a broken egg yolk, its orange circle smudged by the watery veils of evening sky. We drop our speed to inch quietly through the deserted back alleys of the city, the only sounds the drip of water and the imagined whispering of ghosts. I'm struck by how profoundly beautiful Venice is at the tapering end of the year. The damp and dark make stark its graceful lines, its sympathetic melancholy. Crumbling plaster, tilting bell towers – decay is nowhere else in the world more attractive. The elegant rot inevitably sets you marvelling that this impossible project, a city built on water, which was surely doomed to fail, miraculously and beautifully persists. Thus Venice appears as a valiant triumph over time, a glorious poke in the eye to mortality.

From the hotel I take another water taxi to Piazza San Marco. The boat docks expertly in the bucking waves, and I stroll into the grandest of grand squares – now fantastically spacious without its summer hordes. The basilica is ghostly grey and asleep, all its glinting gold put to bed for the night. A few pigeons huddle shivering, a welcome contrast to their bolshy swarming several months ago. On three sides of the piazza, pale arcaded buildings stand handsome and serene. It's like catching a flamboyant stage-actor off-guard and asleep. Come here in warmer months and this square is a heaving whirl of crowds, cameras and café-tables, backed by the magnificent gilded fizz of the basilica, watched over by the hot orange spike of the *campanile*. And in that midday heat, what do people drink? Coffee, of

I'm struck by how beautiful Venice is at the tapering end of the year – the damp and dark make stark its graceful lines, its sympathetic melancholy...

The magic of Venice lies in its paradoxes, its many contradictions. It's a city falling apart yet faultlessly beautiful – it's a city, but not really a city

course. Piazza San Marco was long ago dubbed 'the drawing room of Europe' – the space where the whole continent meets to engage in genteel conversation. And talk always flows better over coffee.

In the early 1600s, coffee first entered Europe through Venice – then a great trading city with a semi-monopoly on luxuries from the exotic east. Europe's very first cafés sprang up in Venice, and all the civilized delights of café culture slowly spread from here. The oldest surviving café in the city today is the Florian, tucked into a corner of Piazza San Marco. It first opened its doors in 1720, and quickly assumed the role of Venice's informal heart of politics and art. The great, the good, the ordinary and the notorious have all supped coffee at the Florian in their time. Casanova did some of his lady-hunting here, while Byron, Dickens and Proust were inspired by the café-characters they discreetly observed. I choose a room whose walls and ceiling are a blaze of oriental portraits, covered in gilt and glass that redoubles the tiny lights of the chandeliers. My fellow patrons are young Venetian couples, or a quiet tourist or two. I'm pleased to find a seat so easily. In the height of summer, this place would be packed.

MAGNETIC PULL

Venice currently receives more than 12 million visitors every year. It's ironic that a city originally built to elude outsiders should now entice them in such abundance. The problem is that the place is just so gorgeous. For centuries, Venice spent much of its trading wealth on beautifying – building palaces and churches, carving statues, slapping on the gold. When the city's wealth and power began to decline from the 1500s onwards, it steadily acquired a new reputation as a place of fun and frivolity. Aristocratic young men making the Grand Tour across Europe couldn't miss making a stop in Venice. And so began a tradition which persists to the present day.

It's often been said that Venice is 'ruined by tourists'. But in fact, the city has been saved by them, historically. Not only have tourists sustained the Venetian economy, they have preserved the physical existence of the place. Without its immeasurable worth to visitors, Venice would long ago have slipped into the mud. But should the invading camera-toting hordes be thanked? The fact is that no individual visitor should ever be begrudged for wanting to behold the glories of Venice. However, there are far more visitors here now than ever before, and recent events (including a collision between a super-sized cruise ship and a local boat) mean that action needs to be taken. With a global population that has more than doubled in the last 40 years, a restriction on visitor numbers to Venice may become a reality. In the meantime, it's worth considering an autumn or wintertime visit to relish not only the atmosphere but also some space and serenity.

Happily, thanks to Venice's unfailing gift for conundrum, ➤

Clockwise from top left: Graffiti on a wall leaves the impression of a city divided; blissful night-time shot; local teenagers soaking up the sun; the back alleys of Venice leave much to explore; the decay of the city is clear, but it really just adds to its charm; unusual doorbell pulls; the iconic Venetian masks; traditional gondolas without the tourists; view from Giudecca

Clockwise from top left: A popular bakery where you can buy many delicious treats; view as you board one of the many water taxis; old buildings of Venice crumbling; the stillness of an autumn evening; Venetian masks are a must-see; night-time in Venice and all is calm; the stunning front of St Mark's Basilica; heading towards the Rialto Bridge

even at the apex of the summer visiting season it's still possible to stray onto a completely deserted back alley. The liquid streets follow the old natural watercourses of the lagoon, and their dense, mazy intricacies mean that some alleys are rarely found by any but the most determined explorer. About 177 canals wriggle through Venice, creating about 28 miles of domestic waterside to stroll. This is a sublime city for aimless roaming on foot. Anonymous alleys are as much a part of the whole Venetian experience as the countless beautiful churches and the sumptuous art-treasures inside. But you are almost certain to get lost eventually! Enjoy it as just another part of the mystery and romance of the city. The unsettling power of Venetian streets to lure you off on strange tangents – and occasionally lead you into disaster – is something wonderfully exploited in famous atmospheric films like *Death in Venice* and *Don't Look Now*.

DAWN DREAMING

The next day, I'm out on the streets at an ungodly hour, knocking back cappuccino at a pavement café. Early morning Venice is ragged and beautiful, its decay even more apparent in the cold morning light. Rotting wooden stumps bristle from the water, rubbish bins overflow, and the canals are chugging with service-boats. I linger on a narrow landing stage and watch barges roaring past laden with supplies. Workmen stand on each one, sternly shepherding their cargo. They're bringing all the day's unglamorous goods into the city – crates of food, cases of beer, plastic items for shops. The boatmen appear as the unsung stage managers and prop assistants, enabling the grand theatre of each Venetian day.

Shimmering out in its lagoon, rising dream-like from its winter mists and its summer heat-hazes, sometimes it's easy to believe that Venice is nothing but a grand illusion. How can it really be what it is? Or have been all it once was? The magic of Venice lies in its paradoxes, its many contradictions. It's a city falling apart yet faultlessly beautiful. Its native population is dwindling, yet it remains crowded. It's a city but it's not really a city – more a living museum, arguably existing only to delight visitors. In Venice, the land isn't land and the streets are the sea. It's a topsy-turvy place that forever outwits you. You think you've grasped it, you think you know where you are, then you turn a corner and… yes, you're lost again.

Venice always surprises you, continually juxtaposing things you think couldn't go together. If there's one view that most seems to sum up this city's natural ease with contradiction, perhaps it's the vista you get looking west in the evening. Beyond the fine bell towers and ornate frontages, above the arabesque windows and delicate roof tiles, the sunset sky glows orange and apocalyptic behind the industrial majesty of the Venetian suburb Marghera on the nearby mainland. Towering steel cranes rend the sky with harsh diagonals, storage tanks glower over the shoreline and rusty cargo ships drag their black burden through the waves. Improbably, these austere modern shapes harmonise perfectly with the frilly historic buildings in the foreground, and enhance the dramatic beauty of the whole scene. In Venice, it seems, anything is possible. V

Even at the apex of summer it's possible to stray onto a deserted back alley, as the liquid streets follow the old natural watercourses of the lagoon…

The Gondola

Their elegance remains, even without the former drapes and trappings, as they glide by so silently like black cats

THE GONDOLA IS A BEAUTIFUL OBJECT, historic and artistic. So sleek in their required black, so silent as they glide through the waterways of *La Serenissima*, they are an art form in themselves.

The gondolas boast their first documented mention in the archives as far back as the 11th century. The last person known to have had a private gondola was the fabulous Peggy Guggenheim (who died in 1979). Her gondola garage in her Grand Canal home, Palazzo Venier dei Leoni, is now a wing of the museum, but she used to frequently glide through the canals en route to Harry's Bar for a well earned Bellini.

There are about 450 gondoliers working in Venice today. Each has their own gondola. To buy one new costs on average €50,000. The price differs according to the degree of wood carving that is ordered on the wooden body and there are six layers of varnish to withstand a watery existence with resilience. There are two gondola sheds for their construction in Venice and the building of one gondola takes 45 days with five men working full time on it. The boat should last 30 years.

Once upon a time they weren't all black and there was no limit to what you could construct on them. Indeed, they become emblems of luxury and display for the wealthy. Moreover, sturdy canopies were built on the gondolas, creating a private space where illicit assignations and political intrigue could run riot.

When Venice was a bustling merchant empire of great wealth and elegance, there were ten thousand gondolas in the waterways, which caused highway pile-ups on a daily basis. The congestion, coupled with their ostentation, which had no limit, led to the decision to scale them right back in size and make them a uniform black colour and for them to return

The prow of the gondola has become a symbol of Venice

Other decorations are chosen by the gondolier

Gondoliers control their boats with one oar

There are around 450 gondoliers working in Venice today

to being vehicles of transparency and transport. Their elegance remains however, even without the former drapes and trappings, as they glide by so silently like black cats.

Their masters are born and bred on the water; the gondoliers are apprenticed and then have to pass a difficult exam on knowledge of the waterways and ability to control the gondola in the narrow labyrinth of canals. They expertly control the boat with one oar (not two as is the norm for a one-man boat) and so the gondola is shaped like a banana as well as being longer on one side so that it doesn't go around in circles. The oar works the boat, held in place by a *forcola* made out of walnut wood. This hand-like apparatus is actually designed personally for each gondolier. Its height and exact shape will be determined by the height and rowing style of the gondolier. The *forcola* is detached each evening and taken home with the owner, as they are expensive and, when left on the gondola, are often stolen. There is one workshop in the area of Cannaregio where these are carved.

At the prow there is a shining metal addition like a cross between a blade and a crown, the *ferro*. The six prongs on one side are said to represent the six *sestieri* (neighbourhoods) of the city and the smaller, more ornate prongs between them represent the three main lagoon islands – Burano, Murano and Torcello. The opposing prong represents the Giudecca.

The shape at the top represents the Doge's cap and the elegant curved line down the prow represents the Grand Canal. All gondolas have this decoration, but other decoration on the gondola is chosen by the individual gondolier. This decoration at the prow of the gondola has become a symbol, not only of the gondola, but of Venice herself. Ⓥ

ABOUT THE WRITER

FREYA MIDDLETON is a private tour guide and writer who lives in Florence, Tuscany. You can read her blog online or learn more about her tours at www.freyasflorence.com

Photography © Freya Middleton

Image © Daniele Ferraro, www.danieleferraro.com

A Venetian Wedding

Image © Daniele Ferraro

Image © Daniele Ferraro

Having celebrated her own wedding in Venice, **Sara Scarpa** offers some advice on the do's and dont's of tying the knot in the City of Love

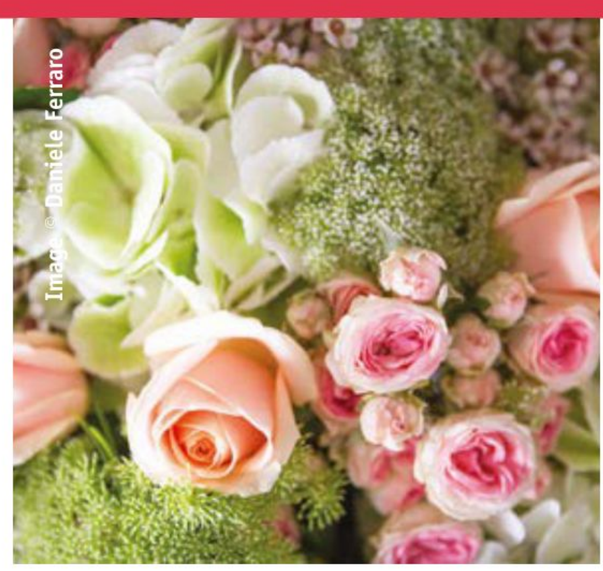
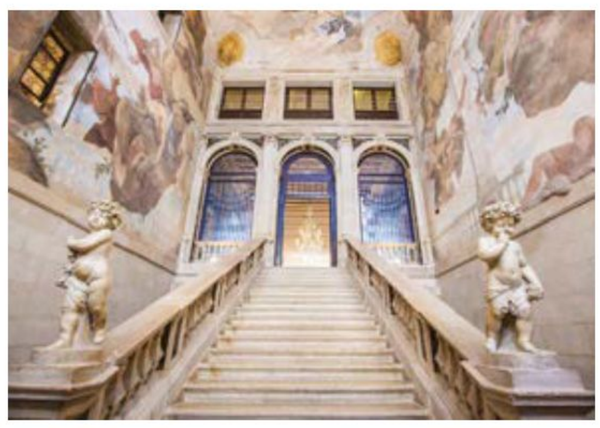


Image © Daniele Ferraro



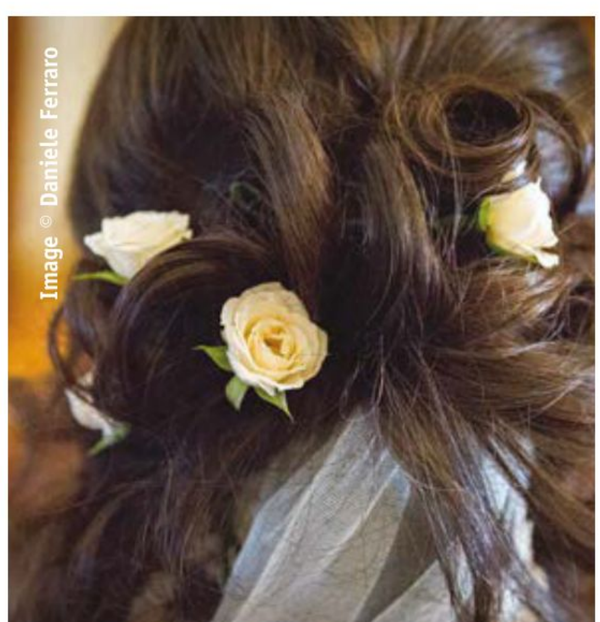


Image © Daniele Ferraro

Images, this page: Memories from my own wedding in Venice – the church (left) is Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari; the reception was at Ca' Sagredo

Images by Iain Reid unless otherwise stated

For me there is no better place to take your vows than in beautiful Venice. A wedding in the magical atmosphere of this captivating city is like a fairy tale that you will never want to come to an end. And the truly unforgettable memories made in this dreamy backdrop will stay with you and your guests forever.

Getting married in this unique floating city was like being dropped into the middle of a fairy tale. As a Venetian, for me the city still retains a magical atmosphere; romance, love and seduction still run through the veins of this venerable old lady. So I can't imagine what it must feel like for someone who has not lived here or who may have only visited occasionally!

It is widely known that Venice is one of the most romantic cities in the world – picturesque canals, quiet *calli*, timeless art, stunning architecture and intimate gondola trips – sometimes complete with a serenade from your gondolier! It surely is the perfect place for a dream wedding.

Of course, there will be a bit of added work if you are organising your big day from the UK, so you will need to plan well in advance to make sure you get your paperwork ready and everything booked – venues, accommodation for the guests, photographer, taxi boats, make-up artist and hairdresser, etc. – but it will definitely be worth it!

THE VENUE

If you have fallen in love with the city and its surrounding islands and have decided to descend on this magical place for your wedding, you will find the choice of venues extensive. This can be quite confusing and rather overwhelming, but don't let it put you off.

Being spoilt for choice here means that whoever you are and whatever your budget, Venice can be yours! As a bride you may dream of arriving at your favourite church or palace on a beautifully decorated gondola. Or you may wish to be the centre of attention with the most beautiful backdrop in the world, St Mark's Square. Or you might want to opt for something completely different and have your day played out away from the crowds, on one of the tranquil islands in the lagoon.

If you are having a civil wedding, these are normally celebrated in the beautiful Palazzo Cavalli, the historical town hall, or in the stunning Ca' Vendramin Calergi – both overlooking on the Grand Canal. If you have chosen a religious, Catholic wedding, you will be spoilt for choice with the numerous spectacular churches, from the most impressive, such as Saint Mark's Basilica, to the most intimate, such as San Nicolò dei Mendicoli. And although Italy is known for its strong Roman Catholic faith you can still have an interfaith marriage, but you should set aside plenty of time for looking into this with both the church and the reception venue.

THE RECEPTION

For your reception venue you could choose an island, an elegant historical palace, a fantastic restaurant, a panoramic terrace facing the Grand Canal or a pretty secret garden. All these places were very tempting to us when we were trying to decide what to choose for our big day. But before

WEDDING CONTACTS

PHOTOGRAPHER
Iain Reid
+44 07 841 350 005
www.beanotownphotography.com
@beanotownphoto

FLOWERS
Fioreria Bonsai di Bodi Armando
329, Via Fausta – Cavallino-Treporti
+39 041 968653

WEDDING FAVOURS
Mola Bomboniere
www.molavenezia.it

RECEPTION
Villa Mabapa
Riviera San Nicolò, 16 – Venice Lido
+39 041 526 0590
www.villamabapa.com

BESPOKE EVENTS
Venice First
Dorsoduro, 948 – Venice
+39 041 522 9907
www.venicefirst.com

Trying to plan everything from abroad can be very challenging, but luckily there are good wedding planners and specialised companies based in Venice

Image © Daniele Ferraro

WEDDINGS IN ITALY

Requirements for British nationals resident in UK
Please bear in mind that these are just guidelines. Please do not take this as professional legal advice. Consult the Italian Embassy or Consulate for any specific information.

There is no official residency requirement for civil ceremonies in Italy, but you will need at least two witnesses over the age of 18 and an interpreter, regardless of weather or not you speak Italian.

When you have decided your wedding date, you will need to contact the Town Hall of the Italian town where you would like to get married to check availability and to make sure that you have all the necessary documents.

Unless you have hired a professional wedding planner to organise it for you, you will, of course, need to do all this yourself.

These are the main steps to follow:

1. Obtain a Certificate of No Impediment (*Nulla Osta*), essential for a wedding in Italy, which you request from your local register office. For more details: www.gov.uk/government/publications/nulla-osta-application-pack-for-marriages-in-italy
2. Make a statutory declaration before a solicitor or public notary in the UK.
3. Legalisation of your documents: the Foreign & Commonwealth Office needs to certify your statutory declaration and CNI as genuine.
4. Get a translation of your Certificate of No Impediment (*Nulla Osta*) translated by a translator based in Italy and sworn before the Italian courts or an Italian Justice of the Peace.
5. Send all the documents to the town hall where you will get married.

setting your mind on a specific venue, first I would advise you to be sure how many guests you are wanting to invite, as depending on your numbers, some places will be excluded. This is because many Venetian palaces can only welcome a certain amount of guests.

Secondly, if you love music and want some dancing at the end of your party, you will need to check this with the venue. Many Venetian palaces do not allow dancing in order to protect the original *pavimenti veneziani* (Venetian mosaic floors) which are in some instances centuries old. Finally, you should decide whether or not you want to use your own favourite catering company, because some places will provide their own service and this may or may not be flexible.

Also remember to take into consideration the fact that in Venice you can only move around by boat or on foot. So the closer your ceremony venue and reception venue are to each other the better. If they are not nearby, then you will need to book private taxi boats well in advance and consider the extra costs.

Obviously, trying to plan everything from abroad can be very challenging, but luckily there are good wedding planners and some specialised companies based in Venice to help. They can assist you with all the organisation, from the purely bureaucratic details, including all the procedure and paperwork which accompanies getting married in a different country, to the most minute details about what you want to happen on the day – everything to make your dream wedding come true.

THE ITALIAN WAY

As you might know, Italian weddings are quite different from British weddings. In Italy food is, as usual, a big thing! After the wedding ceremony, be it religious or civil, everything is about the food and drinks.

While the bride and the groom have hundreds of professional photos taken in the picturesque backdrops in the city, their guests make their way to the venue and the ritual of the buffet can start. The buffet will last for a couple of hours until the newly-weds finally arrive at the venue to toast with their guests with a glass of prosecco or a Bellini.

They then head to a very rich sit-down meal which takes up most of the afternoon or evening. Obviously, the delicious dishes are washed down with a few glasses of excellent wine! At the end of the meal (after multiple courses which have already followed the dozens of starters at the initial buffet!) a refreshing *sgroppino* made with lemon ice cream and prosecco is served to help digestion – just in time to squeeze in a huge slice of cake!

Images, clockwise from top left: Another bride arriving by boat – of course, most people will be arriving by boat; bride and groom in St Mark's Square; wedding preparation detail; Palazzo Ca' Sagredo

WEDDING VENUES

BELMOND HOTEL CIPRIANI
Isola della Giudecca, 10
☎ 0845 077 2222 (general enquiries)
☎ +39 041 240801 (hotel)
www.belmond.com/hotels/europe/italy/venice/belmond-hotel-cipriani/occasions
The famous Hotel Cipriani on the Giudecca is a great option – it certainly was for George and Amal Clooney, being their base before and after their wedding. If you're after elegance and luxury on your big day, then this is the place for you. I would highly advise you to book this venue well in advance. You could start the event with an aperitif on the Fondamenta Terrace overlooking St Mark's Square, followed by an elegant dinner in the detached, lofty spaces of the Granai (the granaries of the Republic) with the impressive Murano chandeliers. Also, you can have drinks and food in the beautiful antique gardens with stunning views over Venice.

CA' SAGREDO HOTEL
Campo Santa Sofia 4198/99
Ca' d'Oro – Venezia
☎ +39 041 2413111
www.casagredohotel.com/wedding
Located between the Ca' d'Oro and the Rialto Bridge, this 15th-century palace still preserves its untouched beauty and has been declared a National Monument. This luxury hotel has an elegant portego with spectacular views over the Grand Canal. The breathtaking staircase with Pietro Longhi's frescoes will lead you to the Tiepolo Hall and to the heart of the palace – the magnificent Music Ballroom with its impressively high ceilings and timeless atmosphere, ideal for a wedding reception.

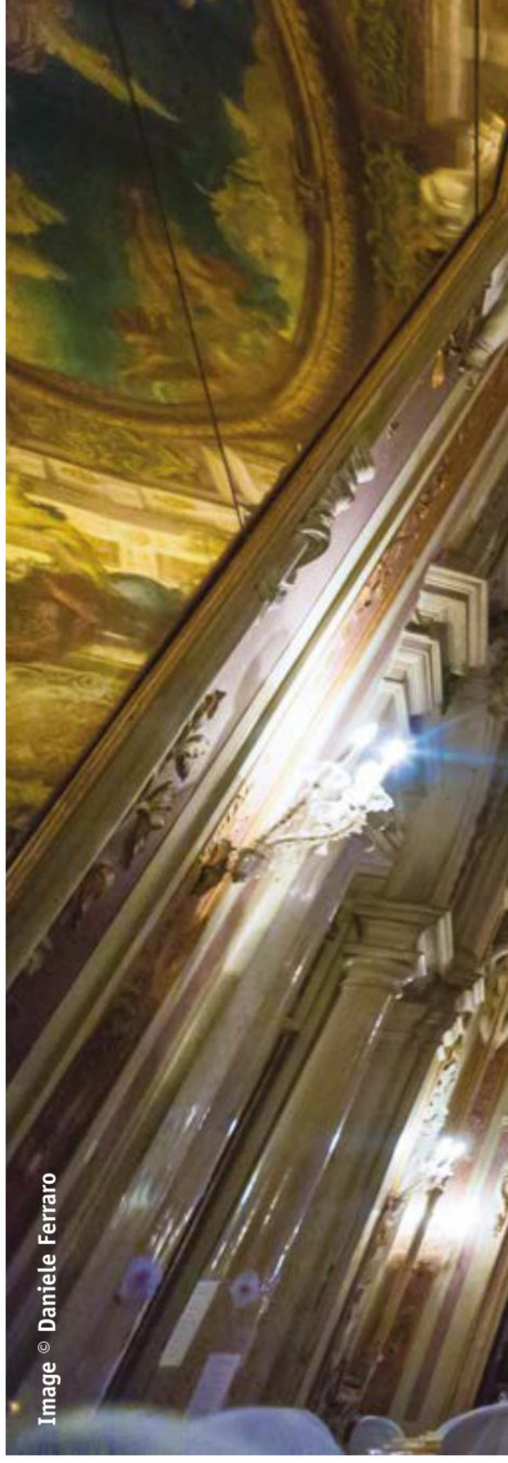


Image © Daniele Ferraro

Being in Venice is quite dangerous as you might fall in love with the city itself – so watch out!

Images, clockwise from top left: Interior of the Ca' Sagredo; interior of the Palazzo Zenobio; bride and groom; wedding bouquet; interior of the Ca' Sagredo

There are no speeches at Italian weddings, so when my husband Iain gave his speech at our wedding last year, our Italian guests were very surprised. At the end of the meal, in accordance with an ancient tradition, the couple hand out small favours offered as keepsakes for their guests. Favours are traditionally five sugared almonds (*confetti*) wrapped in tulle or satin tied with pretty ribbons in assorted colours, and also a very small object (normally silver, crystal or porcelain) to go with them. The five *confetti* symbolise health, wealth, happiness, fertility and longevity. After handing out the *bomboniere* (favours), the couple start the dancing (if the venue allows it) before everyone else joins in.

As Peggy Guggenheim once observed, being in Venice is quite dangerous as you might fall in love with the city itself. So watch out as you will most probably fall in love with Venice – but don't forget about the person you are marrying! Ⓥ

USEFUL CONTACTS

➤ For general official advice in the UK, www.gov.uk/marriage-abroad

➤ For advice about legal document translation, www.leplaw.co.uk

WEDDING VENUES

ISOLA DI SAN SERVOLO
Isola di San Servolo, n.1
http://sanservolo.servizimetropolitani.ve.it/eventi-e-matrimoni

The idyllic island of San Servolo, where we have been guests at numerous friends' fabulous weddings, offers different options such as the terrace with a wonderful view over San Marco, the cloister of the church, the Palazzina Grecale, the Sala Basaglia and the big square which is the heart of the island. You can hire your own catering company and guests are free to relax on the island and dance the night away while enjoying the wonderful backdrop.

PALAZZO ZENOBIO – COLLEGIO ARMENO MOORAT RAPHAEL
Fondamenta del Soccorso, Dorsoduro 2597
☎ +39 041 522 8770
www.palazzo-zenobio.com
Palazzo Zenobio is a magnificent palace with a beautiful garden in the heart of Venice. And the icing on the cake about this venue is that it is located near one of the most beautiful churches in Venice, the Basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari. This is where Iain and I chose for our special day!

You might have seen the Palazzo Zenobio before as it is the set of Madonna's video *Like a Virgin* when she moves around like a sexy ballerina amongst the incredible frescoes and stuccoes of the piano nobile of the palazzo. There are great works by Luca Carlevarijs at the entrance of the palace, but the ballroom, frescoed by Louis Dorigny and decorated with works by a young Giambattista Tiepolo, has to be the real showpiece of the palazzo.

This venue also offers a very pretty garden, large in size for Venice, which is perfect for the buffet and drinks. And, if you wish, and the weather allows it, you could even have the wedding ceremony and the sit-down meal in the garden.

The pretty cobbled path is surrounded by plants, cherubs and pretty trees which are easy for you or your wedding planner to decorate with your finishing touches.

Image © Daniele Ferraro

IL PALAZZO DUCALE

The Palazzo Ducale, or **Doge's Palace**, was home to the Doge of Venice, the supreme authority of the Republic of Venice, and is perhaps the city's most recognisable landmark...

Established in 1340 and built in Venetian Gothic style, The Doge's Palace overlooks the tranquil lagoon and is decorated with works by artists such as Titian and Tiepolo. Having opened as a museum in 1923, the million-plus visitors a year can explore the building in its entirety, including the dungeons and prison cells, accessible by crossing the Bridge of Sighs. Iconic womaniser Casanova did time in the prison here before his miraculous escape! (Read more on page 23.) Visitors need to take a few hours to venture around the Palace and absorb everything, but it's worth the expedition. V

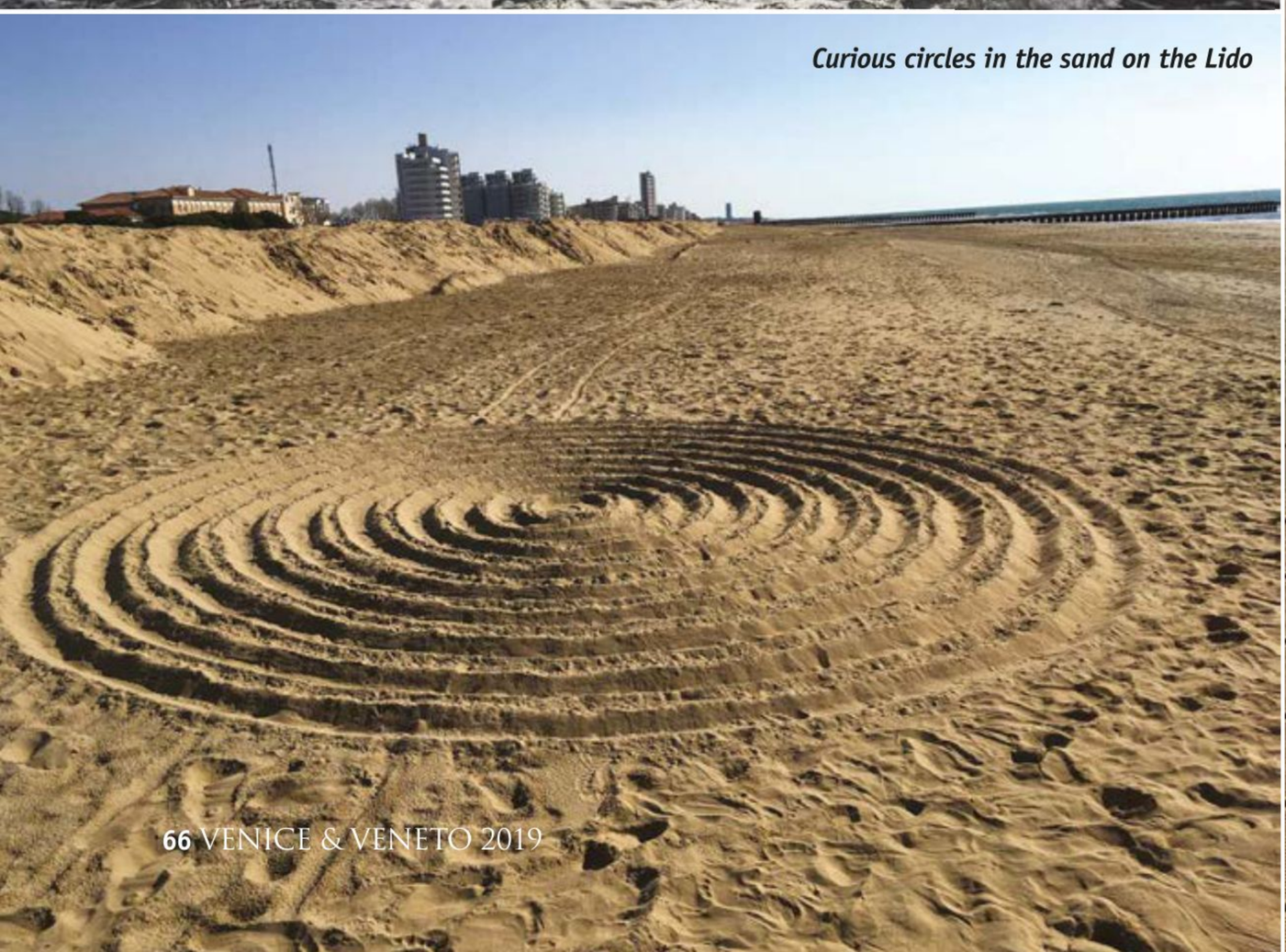
© iStock photo

INTO THE BLUE

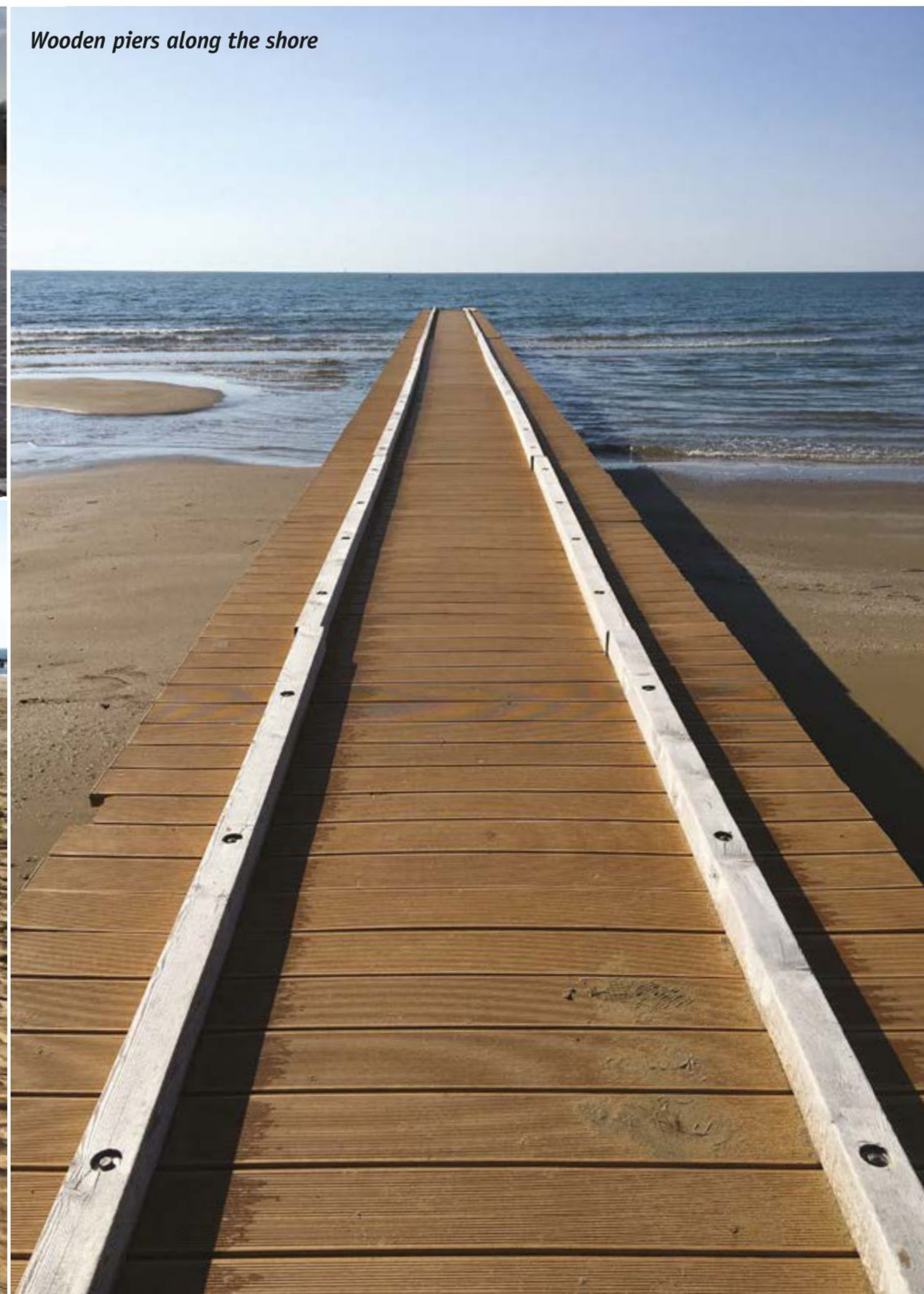
We visit **Almar Jesolo Resort & Spa**, a five-star hotel on the Lido di Jesolo that's redefining the beach holiday for the 21st century

Image © Alamy

Calm waters of the Lido



Curious circles in the sand on the Lido



Wooden piers along the shore

We flew in to Venice's Marco Polo airport leaving behind the chilly doldrums of London's feeble foray into spring. Blue skies and pleasantly balmy temperatures warmed us as we made our way to the Lido di Jesolo, a 35-minute drive from the airport. Now, mention the Lido di Jesolo when you're in Italy and chances are someone will recall happy family holidays by the sea, along its sandy coastline. It is not to be confused with the Venice Lido, though, the narrow strip that separates the Venice lagoon from the Adriatic, and the venue for the Venice Film Festival. Lido di Jesolo is on the mainland, a glorious 15 kilometres of soft, golden sands, lapped by the serene waters of the Adriatic. Bordered by hotels of every style, size and in varying states of (dis)repair, first impressions are one of an area whose heyday might have waxed and waned, but our destination, the Almar Jesolo Resort & Spa, is changing that perception with its modern ethos.

This sleek complex sits just outside the town of Jesolo: an ultra-modern-looking hotel, just four years old, all glass and clean lines, with neat, well-kept gardens and a broad sweep of driveway up to the entrance. The expansive reception area is wide and welcoming, a generous calming space; and our flight-weary shoulders instinctively unknotted a fraction. Outsized glass vases filled with glossy green palms were ranged in simple rows under a beautiful rippled light installation extending right across the ceiling. The play of natural exterior light and shade is continuous and ever-changing with floor-to-ceiling glass a feature throughout the hotel's contemporary interiors. Calming and energising all at once, it's a subliminal infusion of virtual Vitamin D.

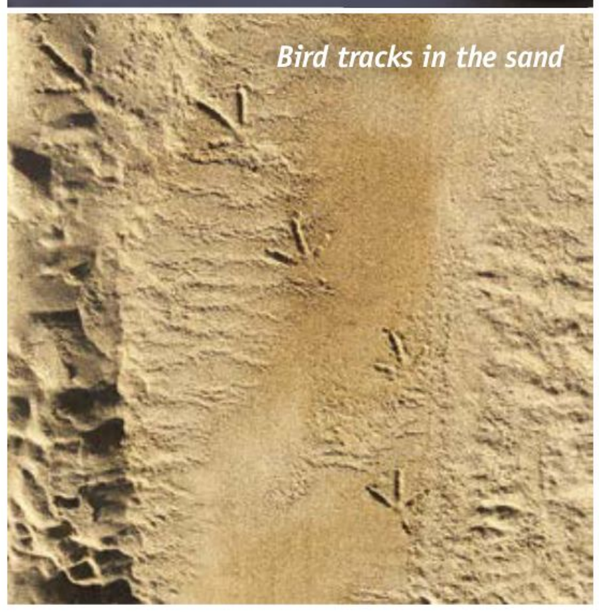
TIME TO MOVE

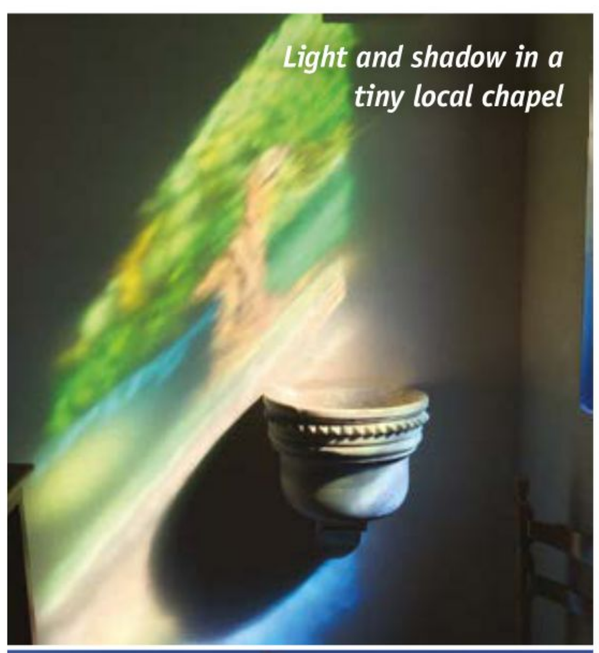
One of the delights of taking a break is just that: a chance to step away from the daily routine and do something else – or nothing at all. The Almar caters for both ➤

Photography by Amanda Robinson unless otherwise stated

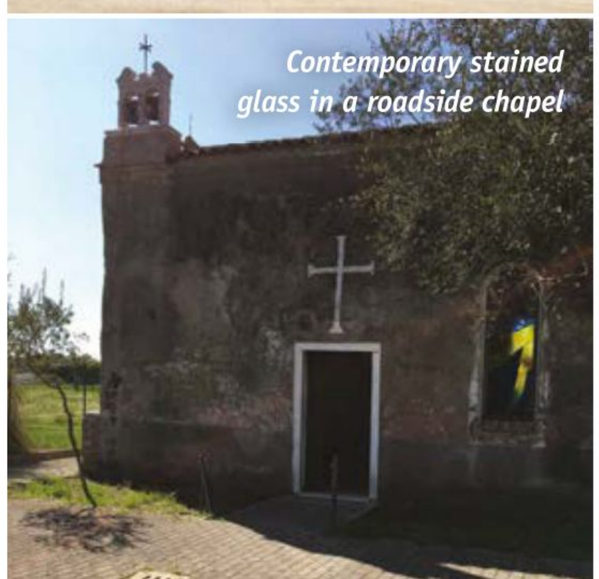
View from Almar Jesolo

Prosecco on the hotel balcony


Bird tracks in the sand


Light and shadow in a tiny local chapel

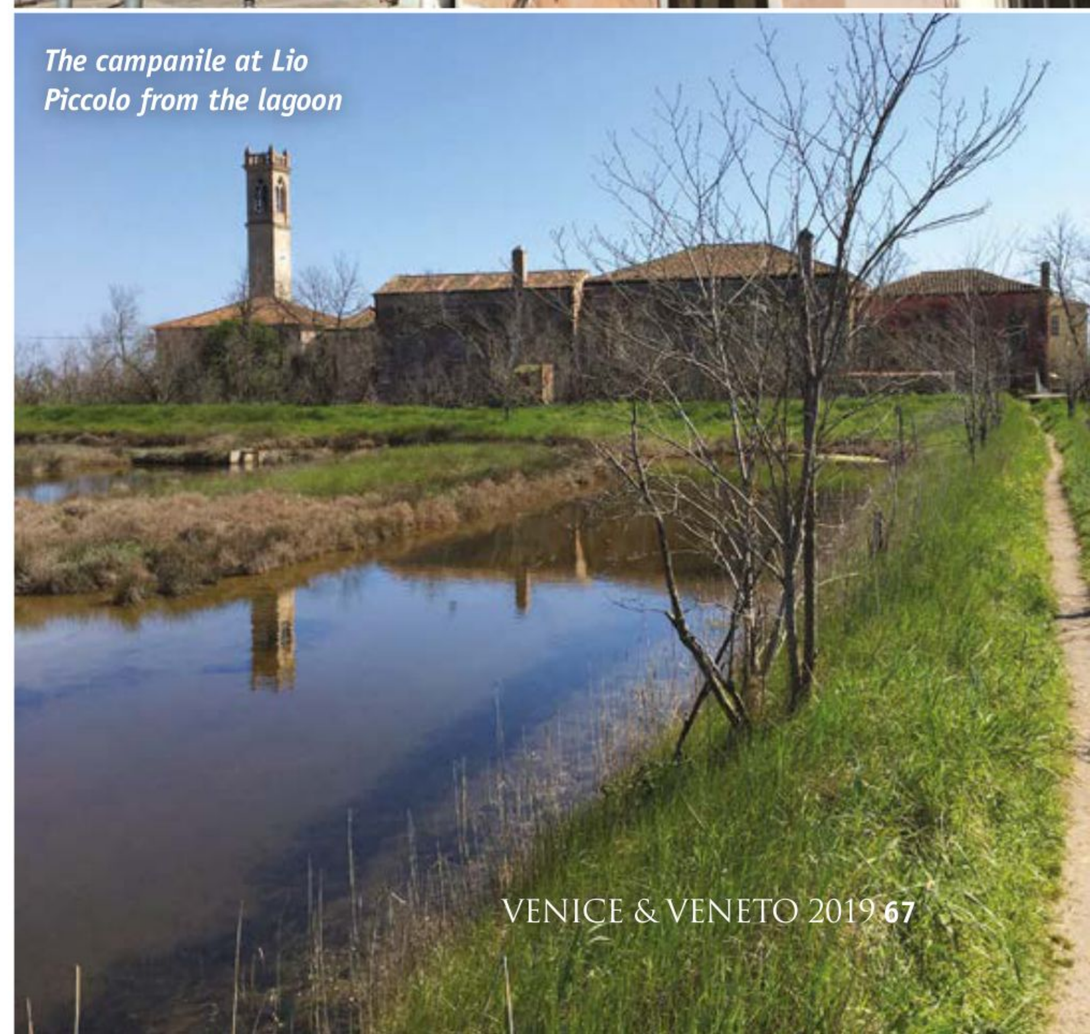
Santa Maria della Neve, Lio Piccolo


Contemporary stained glass in a roadside chapel

Baywatch, Lido-style

Passeggiata on the Lido

Tranquil Treporti in the sunshine


The campanile at Lio Piccolo from the lagoon

STEP INSIDE ALMAR JESOLO RESORT

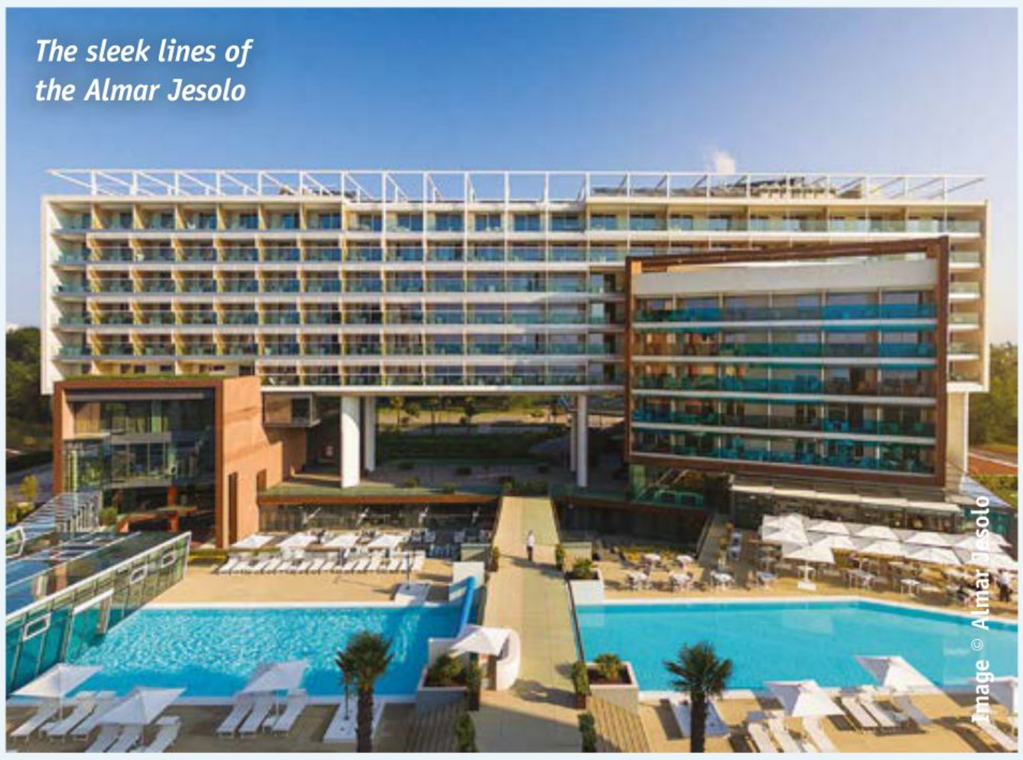

The sleek lines of the Almar Jesolo

Image © Almar Jesolo

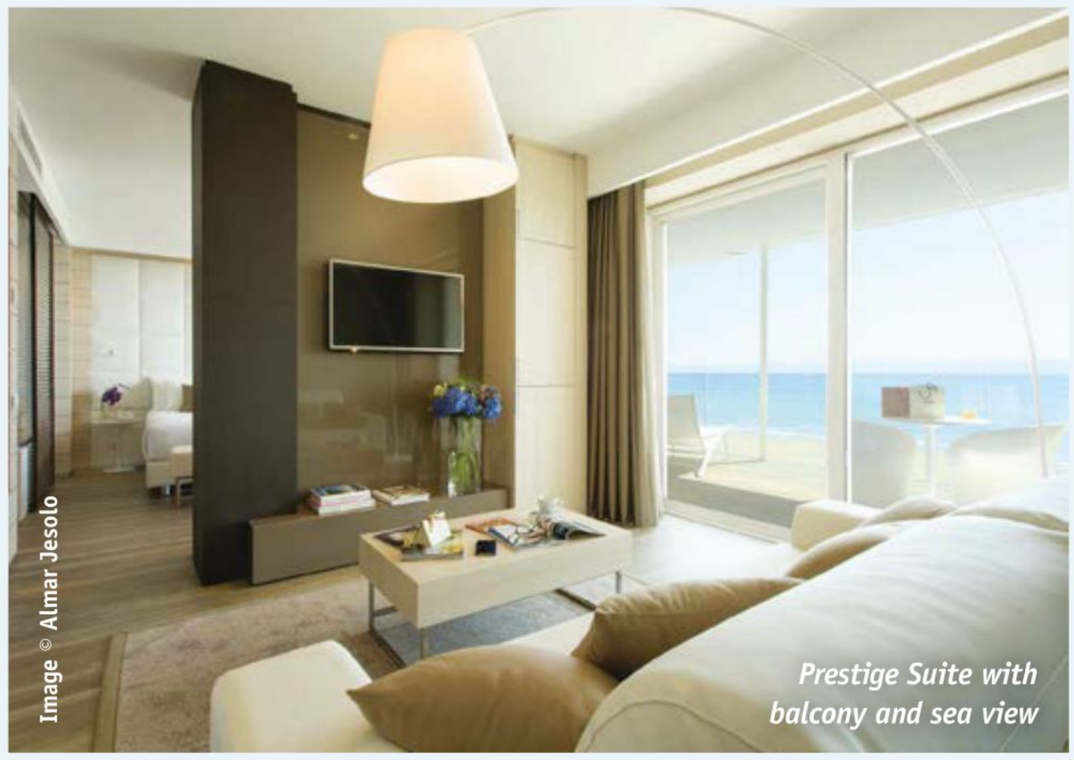

Prestige Suite with balcony and sea view

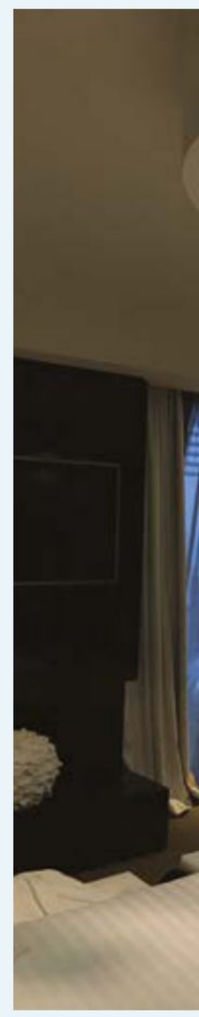
Image © Almar Jesolo

Sitting serenely in a prime beachfront location on the Lido di Jesolo, the Almar Jesolo Resort & Spa is a sleek, modern resort with its own award-winning spa, offering five-star service and the warmest of welcomes. The Almar Jesolo only opened its doors a mere four years ago, and has already established itself on an international stage, winning prestigious accolades including a clutch of trophies at the World Luxury Hotel Awards as well as the Condé Nast Johansens Excellence award for *Europe's Best New on the Scene Luxury Spa 2018*, and *Best Luxury Wellness Spa 2017 in Southern Europe* at the World Luxury Spa Awards.

Cool and airy, the reception is an expanse of creamy tiles, glossy surfaces and stone shades, creating an impression of space and understated luxury. Throughout the hotel, the common areas have floor-to-ceiling windows creating light-and-shade drama with the ever-changing weather outside. One hundred and thirty of the hotel's rooms have spectacular seafront views, while 67 more have a partial seaview or look out over the gardens. They are all furnished to elegantly high standards in contemporary style, with seven categories from loft suites to deluxe family rooms, varying in size from a generous 38 sqm to 110 sqm in the Loft Suites. The panoramic windows let in an enormous amount of light and fresh sea air and open onto generously-sized private balconies where you can relax and take in the beautiful views. Echoing the calming décor of the public areas of the hotel, the rooms are decorated in similar neutral tones; accents of colour come from fresh flowers in every room (chosen specifically for each guest) and the cream-coloured bathroom towels, edged in vibrant turquoise – drawing inspiration from the palette of sea, sun and sandy tones outside. The restful bathrooms are well appointed: rainfall showers, designer basins and baths in the larger suites, where their bespoke brand bath salts are a pampering touch.

The main Mediterra dining room looks out over the outdoor pool. It has an open kitchen, wine cellar and an excellent wine list. The LightBlue Bar is the poolside option, serving a more informal menu as well as refreshing drinks for hot days. The River Lounge Bar is the place to be when the sun goes down as the barman will rustle up a cocktail or two – always happy to advise if you can't make up your mind from the extensive list! They serve light lunches and snacks here too, while it also serves as the setting for the Almar's Tea Time experiences.

Almar's private beach aside, make sure you take a dip in the 70-metre swimming pool. Partly covered, it's used all year round. Enjoy the relaxing Spa with its hot tub, three saunas, three steam baths, Kneipp therapy pools, an ice-room and multisensory showers, as part of your stay. Take a free exercise class in the gym or book a pampering AlmarBlu treatment to complete your feeling of well-being.
www.almarjesolo.com



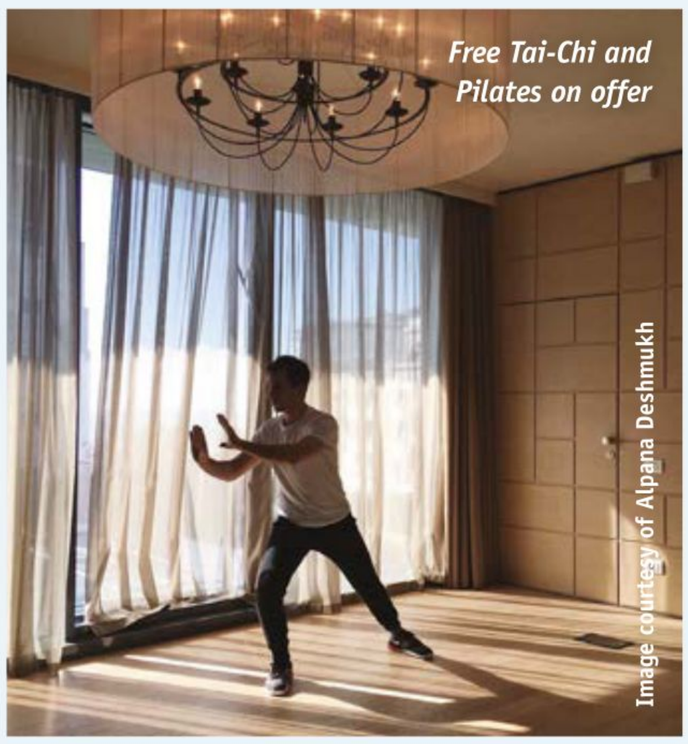

Free Tai-Chi and Pilates on offer

Image courtesy of Alpana Deshmukh

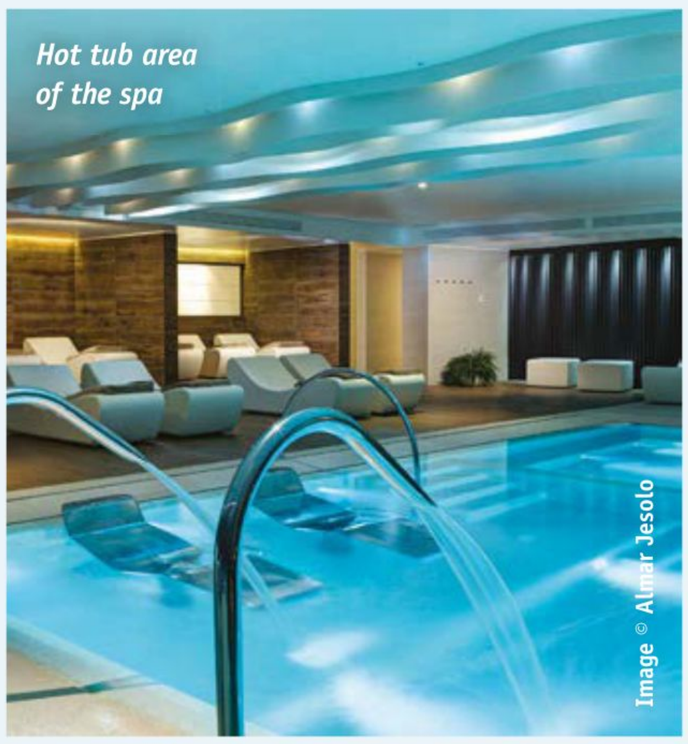

Hot tub area of the spa

Image © Almar Jesolo

Detox Tea Time in the River Bar Lounge

Image © Almar Jesolo

Healthy choices for Detox Tea Time

Squid ink pasta

Guilt-free biscuits

Loft suite chandelier

Welcome snacks

Fritto misto in La Mediterra

Private boardwalk leads to the beach

Aperitivo time

Excellent wine list

ends of the spectrum and any point in between. From your perfectly private terrace and the many public areas which just invite you to sit and chill, to the 70-metre heated swimming pool and spa (see left), it's all about your choice. In the well-appointed gym alongside the spa a programme of exercise classes beckoned. I put myself down for pilates, yoga and postural training in the airy exercise studio overlooking the sea. I came away with more energy, and a rediscovery of the joy of simple movement, something so easy to put aside with daily desk-bound routines. Now back at home, I am inspired to put on my trainers most days and take a run round the block. Our charming instructor Marco would be proud.

TIME TO EXPLORE

Do find time to tear yourself away from the hotel's nurturing hospitality and excellent food if you can, though. Of course, the Lido beach with its soft sand and gentle waters is just a minute's stroll away, along the palm tree-fringed boardwalk; where you can walk for miles along the promenade, stop at one of the buzzy beachside bars for a drink or cool off with a gelato.

The splendours of Venice can be visited in a day, with a welcome return in the evening to this most relaxing of sanctuaries. Or take cycle down to Jesolo and along the promenade to explore the Lido; bike hire is free. We also visited the tiny town of Lio Piccolo in the serene heart of the lagoon: this place has ancient origins and is well worth your time. Here you are surrounded by unspoilt landscapes teeming with wildlife and a real sense of how this natural lagoon looked before the Venice of today was created.

TIME FOR YOU

Making the most of your own time is what the 5-star Almar Jesolo is all about. If you're looking to recharge your batteries by the beach in a place with top-notch facilities and excellent food, in the most hospitable and elegant surroundings, then this is the place for you. We came away refreshed, energised, and mindset changed. V

FIND OUT MORE

ALMABLU WELLNESS AND SPA
☎ +39 0421 388103
www.almarjesolo.com/almablu-spa
The hotel's award-winning Almablu Spa offers treatments created exclusively for them. Book in for a pampering 'Tales of the Sea' ritual, an energy massage inspired by Chinese medicine, or a relaxing facial or body wrap using the luxurious Almablu range of skincare products and cosmetics. They also offer two- or three-day Wellness programmes to rebalance your energy, treating mind and body together, with a bespoke programme of massages, beauty treatments and exercise classes in the state-of-the-art gym. The staff are charming and knowledgeable about the treatments on offer. Their attentive approach is of the highest calibre – no wonder they have won so many accolades. Make sure you book one of their Detox Afternoon Teas after your treatment: a traditional cake stand laden with healthy treats and fresh fruit alongside a pot of herbal tea.

VISITING VENICE
ACTV (Ferry Services)
actv.avmspa.it/it/content/orari-actv
The hotel can arrange a private 30-minute transfer to Punta Sabbioni. From there you can take the public (ACTV) ferry no.14 (every 30 minutes) right to St Mark's Square. The journey takes about 35 minutes.

FESTA DELLA GIUGGIOLA
This lively local festival takes place in September at Lio Piccolo to celebrate the start of autumn and the jujube season, which grows wild in the area. According to local Sara Scarpa it makes a delicious grappa!

FIND OUT MORE

➤ **ALMAR JESOLO RESORT & SPA**
Via Dante Alighieri, 106
30016 Lido di Jesolo
☎ +39 0421 388111
www.almarjesolo.com
A one-night stay for two in a Deluxe seafront view room with buffet breakfast and access to the Spa is around €230. For a longer stay, there are packages like the Pampering Break from around €360 per room (two sharing) for two nights, www.almarjesolo.com/gifts/pampering-break. Check the website for the best prices and latest deals.

GETTING THERE

➤ **AIRPORTS**
Venice Marco Polo airport is 35km away, 35 mins by car. Treviso Canova airport is 45km away, a 45-minute drive

➤ **RAILWAY STATIONS**
Venice San Donà di Piave: 25km
Mestre Venezia: 45km

Across the water

If you can tear yourself away from the wonders of Venice for a few days, you'll soon discover that the surrounding coastline has much to offer. **Rachel Nott** hits the beach…

Peacock in Murano glass

Bordered by the impossibly blue waters of the Adriatic to the east and the majestic Alps to the west, the Veneto region could hardly enjoy a more perfect position. Its peerless portfolio of illustrious cities – Venice, Verona, Padua, Treviso and Vicenza – and alluring landscape make for a perfect break any time of year. But if it's a relaxing getaway you're looking for, where the only exertion required is to feel the golden sand slipping through your toes, or at the very most to meander languidly through ancient streets, you'd be hard pushed to find a more blissful setting than the Venetian coast.

COMING TO CAORLE

Built on the Venetian model and just an hour's boat trip from Venice (two in summer), Caorle is a charming fishing village with a maritime history that dates all the way back to the first century BC. With more than 200 fishermen still living in Caorle, the town has a strong sense of tradition, despite its tasteful modernisation

in the form of boutique shops including a fine *profumeria*, as well as hotels and restaurants serving the freshest locally caught seafood. From the port, you can watch the fishermen going about the same tasks that they have carried out for centuries; repairing nets and scrubbing down boats. The centre of the village is made up of a wide street, Rio Terra, which buzzes with life each evening, and a delightful tangle of shady lanes (*calli*) and small squares, lined with the prettiest pastel-coloured buildings, complete with fine wooden balconies and elegant shutters.

The town was originally constructed with a network of canals and bridges, but the last canal was filled in as recently as 1990. If you follow the winding alleyways to the very heart of the town, you'll enter Vescovado Square, a large paved area dominated by the impressive 11th-century Romanesque cathedral of St Stephen. Inside, you'll find not just a cool, peaceful haven on sweltering midsummer days, but an amazing collection of paintings of the Venetian school including Lazzarini's *The Last Supper*. The most admiring glances, however, are reserved for the circular belltower, stretching upwards a magnificent 48 metres, with its cone-shaped hat almost stroking the cottonwool clouds.

A LIVING SEAFRONT

Leaving Vescovado Square, with the church on your left, you can then walk along the seafront, which is embellished by hundreds of 'Living Rocks', beautifully carved in an array of styles, from detailed scenes to geometric patterns. Each year in June, a competition is held in which artists are invited by the town to each carve a rock against the mesmerising backdrop of the Adriatic Sea. The result: a rather spectacular all-year-round open-air exhibition, which is bolstered by acrobatic shows, men on stilts, puppetry and jugglers throughout the town during the competition itself. Add to this a jazz festival in April, and an international street theatre festival and costume show in September, and you can begin to realise Caorle's significance as a flourishing town in its own right.

Of course, one of Caorle's main attractions is its 15-kilometre stretch of soft, sandy beach bordered by trees – a hotspot for Venetian families as well as foreign tourists. With around 200 hotels, nine campsites and numerous holiday apartments, there is accommodation to suit all budgets. And whether you want to soak up the sun, enjoy a pampering in one of the 15 health spas, or enjoy a more active break, you'll find provision for your needs, with loungers and umbrellas for hire, plus beach biking, surfing, water-skiing, volleyball and even golf up for grabs.

Anyone with a love of nature and history will find Caorle's lagoon an intriguing spot. Surrounded by acres of natural habitat, home ➤

You'd be hard pushed to find a more blissful setting than the Venetian coast

The famous houses of Burano

'Living Rocks' on Caorle seafront

Colourful Caorle

Fishermen's casoni

Photography by Rachel Nott

WHERE TO STAY

➤ CAMPING MARINA DI VENEZIA,
Via Montello 6, Punta Sabbioni, Cavallino Treporti
☎ + 39 041 530 2511
www.marinadivenezia.it
This is camping on a truly grand scale. Four-starred Marina di Venezia is like a small town with everything you could possibly require all contained within it. You can bring your own tent or caravan or choose from a vast range of chalets and bungalows. As well as a beautiful beach, you'll find an Olympic-sized swimming pool, baby pool, supermarket, shops, restaurants, bars, laundry, as well as a dogs' park! There are also plenty of activities for kids and adults including bike hire and even a PADI diving school, plus a full entertainments programme. Some families don't even feel the need to set foot outside the complex for a whole fortnight!

➤ AGRITURISMO MARANGHETTO,
Strada Durisi 15, Marango di Caorle
☎ +39 333 461 2900
www.maranghetto.com
Set in 100 hectares of countryside just nine kilometres from Caorle, this elegant farmhouse is a magical place from which to explore the Veneto. The farmhouse contains three self-catering apartments that are suitable for up to three people (or a family of four). There's a large lawn, children's play area and vegetable garden for your use too. Owner Marica Ciani Bassetti speaks fluent English and is more than happy to suggest places of interest as well as wine and food itineraries along the Lison–Pramaggiore wine route and cycle routes on Maranghetto's red bikes!

➤ MOLINO STUCKY HILTON,
Giudecca 810, Venice
☎ +39 041 272 3311
www.molinostuckyhilton.com
Opened in July 2007, the grand Molino Stucky declared itself to be 'Venice's newest landmark'. A bold claim – but you have to hand it to them, this is an impressive hotel on a number of levels. From its waterside location on the Giudecca canal to its five restaurants, rooftop swimming pool and regular complimentary water taxi to Piazza San Marco – not to mention its elegantly opulent rooms and suites, this hotel is a treat. A great base – with great views – from which to enjoy Venice and its beautiful environs, whether you're here for business or pleasure.

➤ to herons, egrets, cranes and coots, these tranquil waters offer rich fishing opportunities too. You can visit the lagoon by boat or bike or follow in the footsteps of Ernest Hemingway who captured the unique essence of the lagoon in his novel *Across the River and Into the Trees* during one of his many stays here at the home of the Franchetti family. As you explore this peaceful landscape you'll notice clutches of *casoni* – fishermen's houses made entirely of reeds. They're no longer lived in, but are still used daily by the fishermen to work and rest, and are surprisingly homely inside. As you wander around you can imagine this area as it used to be before the world wars: a prosperous community living and working in harmony with their environment.

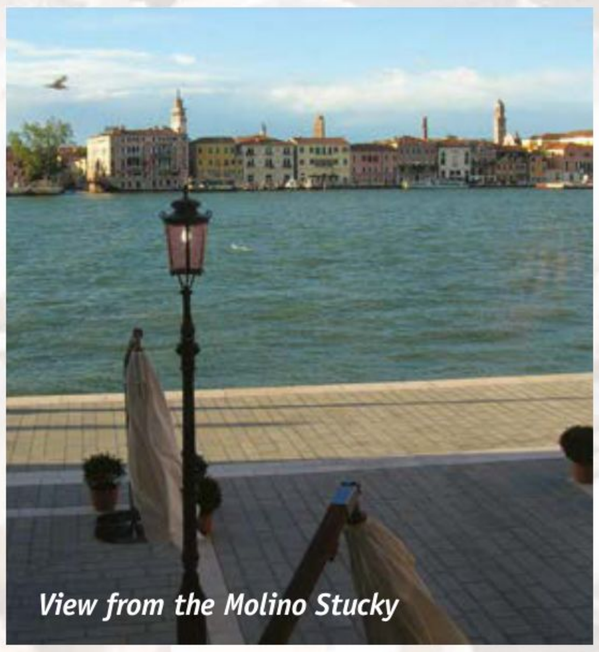
LIFE'S A BEACH

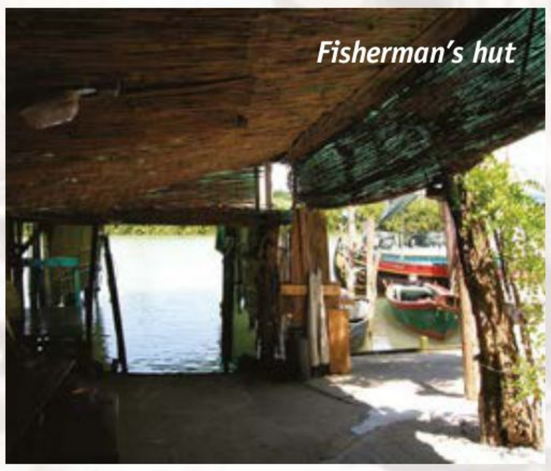
Leaving the charms of Caorle behind, Bibione is another hugely popular resort offering eight kilometres of golden sand bathed in sunshine from dawn to dusk. This stylish resort has everything for the modern tourist, from a qualified dermatologist on the beach offering a personal analysis of your phototype and advising on your limit for staying out in the sun, to Nordic walking through pine woods and along the beach to tone muscles and impart a sense of wellbeing. Bibione is a sporty town too, where the fittest – or bravest! – among us can embark on a sports inclusive package to keep you moving from morning till night.

And as you'd expect from a town committed to health and the body beautiful, Bibione Thermae is a spa centre par excellence. Surrounded by pine forests, there's no better place to soothe your cares away. Choose from spa pools, hydromassage, saunas, Turkish baths, mud baths, and a selection of beauty treatments. Thanks to the mineral enriched waters, which bubble up naturally at a temperature of 52°C, some treatments are even recognised by the Italian National Health Service as helping to relieve symptoms of

For the inquisitive explorer there really is so much more on offer...

The Molino Stucky Hilton


View from the Molino Stucky


Fisherman's hut

A few of Caorle's 'Living Rocks'

respiratory, rheumatic, vascular and ear, nose and throat disorders.

TAKE TO THE ISLANDS

During a visit to Venice and its surrounds, a day wandering the nearby islands of Murano and Burano is a must. Famous since the 13th century for its glass, Murano is home to Museo Vetrario (the glass museum) as well as a swathe of glass workshops and factories selling the famed glassware from glasses and jewellery to chandeliers and more. While you're on the island, don't miss glass blowing in action by skilled Murano craftsmen. It's a remarkable spectacle and you can visit places like the Colleoni workshop to witness this age-old tradition (www.colleoni.com).

Burano, meanwhile, is famous not only for its fine lacework, but also for its brightly coloured houses, which legend has it were to guide fishermen back to the right house at night. The art of lacemaking has been practised here since the 16th century and the old lace school is now home to the Museo del Merletto di Burano (lace museum) which is well worth a visit. If you're lucky you may even catch a group of Burano ladies hard at work at this intricate craft.

These highlights are really just intended to impart a delicious morsel of what Venice has to offer beyond the spectacular city itself. The city is indeed an incredible place, but for the inquisitive explorer or sun-seeking family there is so much more on offer if you're prepared to travel just an hour or two across the exquisite watery landscape of *La Serenissima*. Ⓥ

Picturesque house in Caorle

Marina di Venezia pools

GETTING THERE

➤ BY PLANE

To explore the area beyond Venice – Caorle, Bibione and the islands of the lagoon – it is best to fly into Venice Marco Polo, or to Venice Treviso for a slightly further afield option.

Piazza delle Erbe at night, Verona

VENETO & BEYOND

Explore Veneto and further afield to explore historic cities, exquisite rural towns, soaring mountains and more...

Veneto & Beyond

Photography © iStock

Clockwise from top left: Arches and statues coming into Piazza dei Signori; Verona's centro storico and Ponte Pietra spanning the River Adige; the Arena, where I was lucky enough to see a concert by Adele; Adele braving the rain in plastic raincoat; the Duomo; Palazzo della Ragione; wine-tasting at La Maragnole; vineyards at La Maragnole

Photography by Penny Wainwright unless otherwise stated

48 HOURS IN...

Verona

Penny Wainwright combines a trip to see a concert at the amphitheatre with a tour of Romeo and Juliet's Verona, and a day out in the vineyards of Valpolicella...

Verona, *La Città dell'Amore*, the City of Love, is known – to English-speaking visitors at least – first and foremost, for Romeo and Juliet. Shakespeare's ill-fated young lovers lived (and died) here and there is a never-ending queue of visitors to Juliet's house and the famous balcony in Via Cappello – even though she never actually existed and therefore never actually lived here. They come to add their names to the wall of graffiti that runs alongside the entrance to the courtyard. They come to rub the right breast of Juliet's statue in the courtyard, hoping that this simple act will bring them luck in love. So many have come to do this that recently they have had to replace the statue – the old one now stands inside the building. They come to stand upon the balcony where Juliet was wooed by Romeo. In fact, it's not actually a real balcony – it's a converted sarcophagus – but that doesn't matter, still they want to be photographed upon it.

And they come to get married. The new 'Marry me in Verona' is a City of Verona initiative to promote wedding ceremonies in venues of different styles and sizes across the city. The room opening onto the balcony at Juliet's house is a popular location for vows to be taken. But there are other places. The tapestry room, *la Sala degli Arazzi*, in Palazzo Barbieri, the city hall, with its wooden panelling and two large 16th-century tapestries is an impressive and more formal wedding venue than Juliet's house.

WHAT TO SEE AND DO

THE ARENA ❶
Piazza Bra, 1
(HQ: via Roma, 7d)
☎ +39 045 800 5151
www.arena.it
You can tell just by its website address that this is an important place: it is not the Verona Arena, it is *the* Arena. More than just a tourist attraction, it is a working convert venue that puts on major operas all summer – orchestral and pop concerts!

CYCLE TO LAKE GARDA ❷
You don't need to be fit to do this, or even particularly well-organised. There are public bicycles ready for rent in Verona and the ride to Lake Garda is all along the riverside, so there are no climbs or tricky bits.

CASTELVECCHIO AND PONTE SCALIGERO ❸
Corso Castelvecchio, 2
☎ +39 045 806 2611
www.museodicastelvecchio.comune.verona.it
Castelvecchio and Ponte Scaligero were built around 1354. Castelvecchio is now home to the city's art museum. Ponte Scaligero is a brick and marble fortified bridge that spans the River Adige from here. The castle is open on Mondays from 1.30pm to 7.30pm, and every other day from 8.30am to 7.30pm. Admission is free with a Veronacard, or €6 without one. From October to May, the price is €1.

SHOPPING ❹
Go along Via Mazzini to window shop or buy exclusive goods – visit during mid-July and August for the sales. Corso Porta Borsari has other stylish shops to browse in. Once a month (on the second Saturday) there is an antiques market in Via Sottoriva. Piazza delle Erbe has market stalls selling everything from fresh fruit to sun hats every weekday morning.

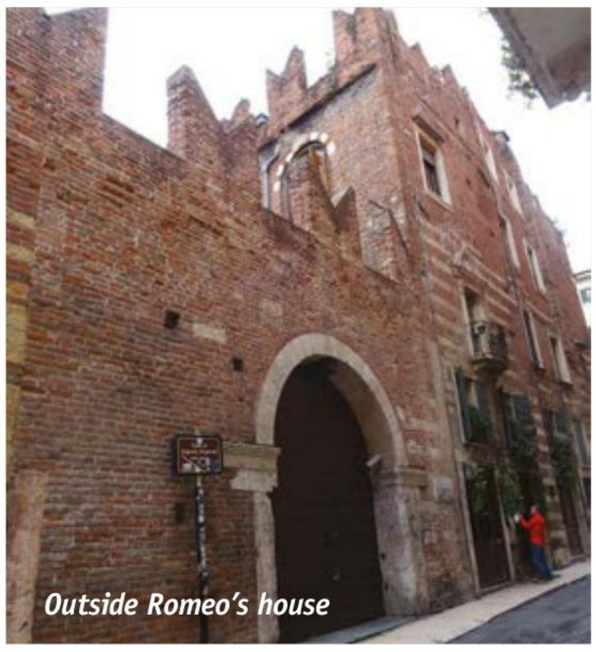
WINE TOUR ❺
www.cellartours.com/italy/wine-tours/verona
Take a luxury wine tour in the Valpolicella region with VIP tasting, lunch and transport provided.

PALAZZO GIUSTI ❻
Via Giardino Giusti
info@palazzogiardinogiusti.it
www.palazzogiardinogiusti.it
A beautiful Italian garden to visit in Verona is at Palazzo Giusti, to the east of the city. The formal garden was designed in the 16th century with ancient trees, fountains and grottos. The garden is open all year from 9am to 7pm; closed on Christmas Day. Entry costs €10, reduced to €5 with a Veronacard. Students and seniors €7 while children under 11 go in free.

Castelvecchio – the 'Old Castle'

Juliet's tomb

Inside Juliet's house


Outside Romeo's house

DON'T MISS

THE OPERA
The opera season in Verona runs through high summer. The Arena is one of the most atmospheric places in the world to see musical performances of every kind, but opera is its speciality. Note that the stone seats can get uncomfortable after a while, though you can hire cushions take your own. Shows usually start around 9pm. www.arena.it

During this visit to Verona, I was keen to try to see as much as I possibly could in one day, as I had intended to get out of the city on the second day of my stay to go and see the vineyards of the famous Valpolicella wine-growing region, which lie just to the north of here, up the River Adige, to the east of Lake Garda.

A map and a guide book are necessary items if you want to make the most of your time here, but so too is a Veronacard, the all-inclusive city pass that provides free entry to 16 of the city's main attractions, and reduced-fee entry to five others. The card is valid for either 24 hours (€20) or 48 hours (€25). It can be purchased at many of the sites of interest, and also at tobacconists, and by following the links on the city's tourist office website at www.turismoverona.eu.

Needless to say, it is well worth getting your hands on a Veronacard if you want to see all that the city has to offer – and there is a lot to see, beyond the Shakespearean connection! Not only will it save you a lot of money, it will also save you all the bother of having to pay in cash.

It is well worth getting a Veronacard if you want to see all that the city has to offer

ROMEO'S HOUSE

Having visited Juliet's house, I set off to Romeo's house in Via Arche Scaligere. Now, Romeo is also a fictional character, but there are strong grounds to believe that his family, the Montagues, did exist – and we even know where they lived. Unfortunately, unlike Juliet's house, Romeo's house is not open to visitors. All you can see of it are its crenelated walls. The house, however, stands near the tombs of the Della Scala (or Scaligere) family, which are impressive in themselves, with statues and ornate ironwork surrounding them.

The Scaligere family ruled Verona from the late 13th century through the 14th century and made a major contribution towards developing the city. The Palazzo del Podestà, next to the Loggia del Consiglio in Piazza dei Signori, was the family's seat of

View across the River Adige towards the old town

power. Around the corner from Piazza dei Signori are the family tombs, in the grounds of Chiesa di Santa Maria Antica, the family's private chapel on Via Arche Scaligere. The three tombs have elaborate carvings and sculptures, surrounded with wrought-iron fencing depicting the family's ladder symbol.

PALAZZO DELLA RAGIONE

Another place worth seeing while you are in the area is the Palazzo della Ragione, which stands between Piazza della Erbe and Piazza dei Signori. This was the home of the Municipality of Verona.

The Chapel of the Notaries on the first floor of the tower is dedicated to St Zeno and St Daniel. It is a small, wood-panelled chapel with paintings depicting the miracles of the two saints. In the Museum of Frescos, next to the Torre dei Lamberti, the Guarienti room is a reconstruction of the interior of a 16th-century *palazzo* with frescoes on the walls.

The final location I visited was adjacent to the 14th-century monastery of St Francis, where Romeo and Juliet were married by Friar Laurence, and where Juliet is supposed to be buried.

Towards the edge of the historical centre, near the River Adige, are two impressive churches: the Duomo Santa Maria Matricolare, in Piazza Duomo, and the Basilica di Santa Anastasia. The Duomo di Santa Maria Matricolare is Verona's cathedral, built on the site of a Roman temple; and in Piazza Sant'Anastasia is the church commissioned by the Scaligeri family in 1290.

From here it is a short walk to the river. Crossing the Ponte Pietra, the 'Stone Bridge', over the River Adige, I visited the Roman theatre and, above it, the Archeological Museum, with Roman statues and artefacts. Climbing up to Castel San Pietro provides further views across the river towards the city.

IF YOU HAVE TIME...

➤ TAKE A TRIP TO LAKE GARDA
The lake is an easy half-hour drive away, and there are regular trains. It's on the Milan-Venice train line and journeys are between 20-40 minutes to Desenzano. This is the biggest town on the lake and the most expensive, but the best views of the lake are from Malcesine and Riva. www.lefrecce.it

DON'T MISS

TOCATI
Tocati is an international festival of street games which was founded in 2003 to share traditional street games, such as playing with spinning tops. Tocati takes place in September in the *centro storico*. Each year, a different country is invited to present and teach a traditional game. In 2019, Tocati is on between 12-15 September. www.tocati.it

WHERE TO STAY

RELAIS B&B BACIO DI LUNA 8
Via Torricelle, 16
☎ +39 349 424 8481
info@relaisbaciodiluna.com
bb-relais-bacio-di-luna.verona.hotels-veneto.com/en/
The Bacio di Luna is three kilometres outside the city, on Via Torricelle. This is where I stayed on this trip. There are two double ensuite bedrooms and one suite. The rooms are named after the family – Francesca, Giulia and Luisa. The breakfast room overlooks Verona and the surrounding countryside, with chairs for reading and relaxing, while outside there is a terrace for sunny days and parking.

HOTEL AURORA 9
Piazzetta XIV Novembre
(close to Piazza della Erbe)
☎ +39 045 594717
info@hotelaurora.biz
www.hotelaurora.biz
3-star hotel with a terrace and bar overlooking Piazza Delle Erbe. Open all year round.

HOTEL ACCADEMIA 10
Via Scala
☎ +39 045 596222
info@hotelaccademiaverona.it
www.accademiaverona.it
95 rooms and suites in an elegant 4-star hotel right in the *centro storico* with its own parking.

RELAIS DE CHARME IL SOGNO DI GIULIETTA 11
Via Cappello, 25
☎ 0808 145 3778
booking@sognodigiulietta.it
www.ilsognodigiulietta-guesthouse.com
In the courtyard of Juliet's house. Each evening the courtyard beneath the balcony is locked and set with tables for guests to dine in the courtyard. There are rooms facing Via Cappello, while others overlook the courtyard.

VILLA AMISTA BYBLOS ART HOTEL 12
Via Cedrare, Corrubbio di Negarine, Valpolicella
☎ +39 045 685 5555
info@byblosarthotel.com
www.byblosarthotel.com
Villa Amista Byblos Art Hotel is situated on Via Cedrare, Corrubbio di Negarine, in the Valpolicella countryside. It is a beautiful, elegant 18th-century building filled with modern furniture and pieces of art. There are designer rooms and suites, a spa, swimming pool and gourmet restaurant set in secluded grounds. It is an interesting mixture of contemporary art and design with funky colours within an old villa.

WHERE TO EAT

RISTORANTE ARCHE 13
Via Arche Scaligere
☎ +39 045 800 7415
arche@ristorantearche.com
www.ristorantearche.com
Ristorante Arche is on Via Arche Scaligere and specialises in reinventing old recipes and fish dishes. The restaurant has been run by the Gioco family since 1879 but there has been a restaurant on the site since 1420. This means that Romeo's family probably did eat here. Or at least maybe…
€ €

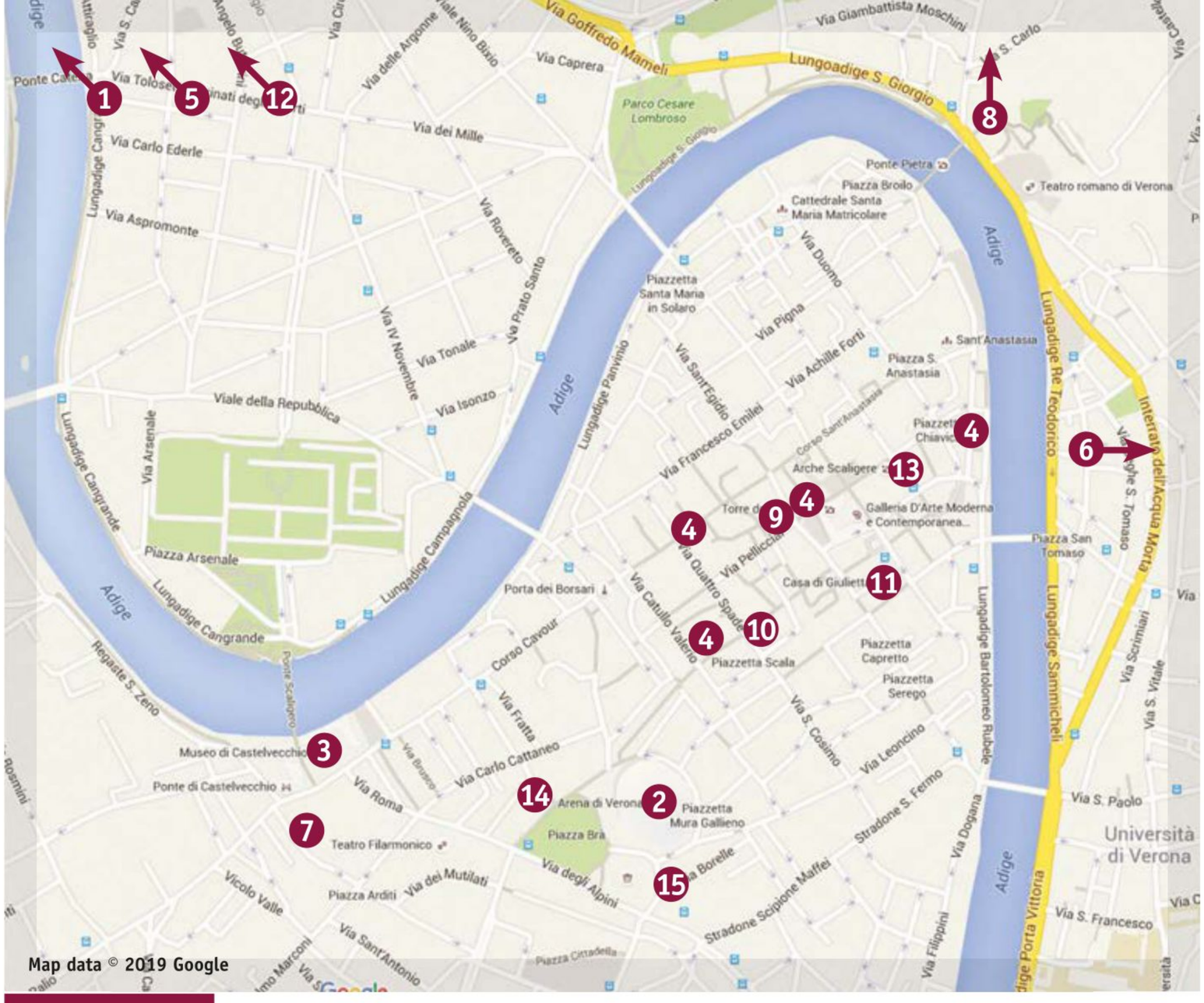
RISTORANTE OLIVO 14
Piazza Bra, 18
☎ +39 045 803 0598
www.olivo1939.it
Ristorante Olivo is in Piazza Bra, right in front of the Arena. It specialises in speciality salads and pizzas. It originally started as a coffee shop, then became a restaurant, with its cuisine making reference to local dishes. Open for lunch and dinner from Monday to Friday and all day from midday to 11pm at the weekends.
€ €

PEPERINO PIZZAGRILL 15
Piazzetta Municipio, near Piazza Bra
☎ +39 045 8029016
www.peperinopizza.it
Well-priced pizza, and very good. A three-course meal here will cost you around €18 a head, with pizzas and pasta dishes starting at €7.
€

RISTORANTE ENOTECA MAFFEI 16
Piazza delle Erbe
☎ +39 045 801 0015
info@ristorantemaffei.it
www.ristorantemaffei.it
The Maffei family *palazzo* stands on the site of Verona's main temple in Roman times, the Capitol. Statues decorate the balustrade of the terrace. Open during the summer from midday to 10.30pm.
€ €

PIZZERIA DU DE COPE 17
Galleria Pellicciai
☎ +39 045 595562
www.pizzeriadudecope.it
info@pizzeriadudecope.it
Between Piazza Bra and Piazza delle Erbe. Another decent pizzeria with good food at good prices. Open at lunchtime and in the evening until 11pm.
€

➤ KEY TO RESTAURANT PRICES
(full meal per person, not including wine)
€ **Up to €25**
€ € **€26-€50**
€ € € **More than €50**



DON'T MISS

VINITALY
Vinitaly is a major international wine show held in Verona every April. Though primarily a trade fair, they also put on a two-day event called 'Vinitaly and the City' in Piazza dei Signori during the week, where wine lovers gather to taste new tipples and make new friends. The 2020 dates are 19-22 April. www.vinitaly.it

Everywhere I walked in Verona I saw frescos and decorations on buildings, especially in Piazza dei Signori and Piazza della Erbe, a square full of market stalls.

WHISTLE-STOP WINE

I spent one day in the Valpolicella region, visiting three wine cellars, two villages and two restaurants. I tasted 16 wines and ate many local specialities in one amazing day! My guide for this day of exploration was Antonella Bampa, a wine guide for the region, who opened my eyes to the production of wine and, more importantly, gave me the chance to meet some passionate winemakers.

Le Maragnole vineyard is in the Marano Valley. Fabio Corsi started as a winemaker in 2004, although the family has worked the land for a long time. For Fabio, the main investment is time and ongoing contact with the grapes and the winemaking process. The grapes are grown using the pergola system as this keeps them high above the ground and the canopy protects them from harsh weather. Grapes are stored and dried in wooden crates in the *fruttaio*. The original cellar is around 300 years old, with wines stored in French oak barrels, known as *tonneaux* or *barriques*, depending on their size.

A short stop was made at Zyme, Celestino Gaspari's cellar in San Pietro in Cariano, to see the old cave wine cellar, where Gaspari had started in 2003. The cave opens into the modern building and creates a natural humidification system.

The final vineyard, Villa Spinosa, is located in the Negrar Valley. Enrico Spinosa has developed many aspects of his estate, from arranging cultural events to creating two holiday apartments. The villa has a beautiful formal garden, with a raised terrace overlooking the vineyards and countryside. Enrico's favourite roses and lemons are incorporated in the garden. The wine cellar, however, is Enrico's passion. He is continually developing the cellar with an emphasis on the quality of wine. There we tried a Jago Valpolicella Ripasso Classico, made from the grapes that had been grown on the Jago cru vineyard.

The grapes are grown using the pergola system as this keeps them high above the ground

Lunch was taken at El Pendola in Fumane, run by Anna Maria Cerodini. As we ate, we sampled Bianc'Anna, Valpolicella Classico and Anna Maria

l'Amarone created by the family. Anna Maria lavished food on us with three *antipasti* and three pastas, plus cheese and a dessert with cakes. In the evening we visited Bottega de Corgnan in San'Ambrogio for dinner. Gaetano Zanella's restaurant was established in 1954 and aims for good-quality local food with the 'excellence of simplicity'. The dinner was an ever-changing range of dishes accompanied by wines from another small winemaker, Marcello Vaona, from his Novaia cellar.

In San'Ambrogio, I visited Palazzo Bassani, a 13th-century villa which is owned by the town and is being restored. It has become a school of art and a professional institute of marble. The cellars are to be renovated and made into a museum of wine.

From San'Ambrogio, I travelled to San Giorgio di Valpolicella, which in November 2015 was named one of the *Borghi più belli d'Italia*, Italy's most beautiful villages. It is located on top of a hill and has a spectacular view over the countryside and Lake Garda.

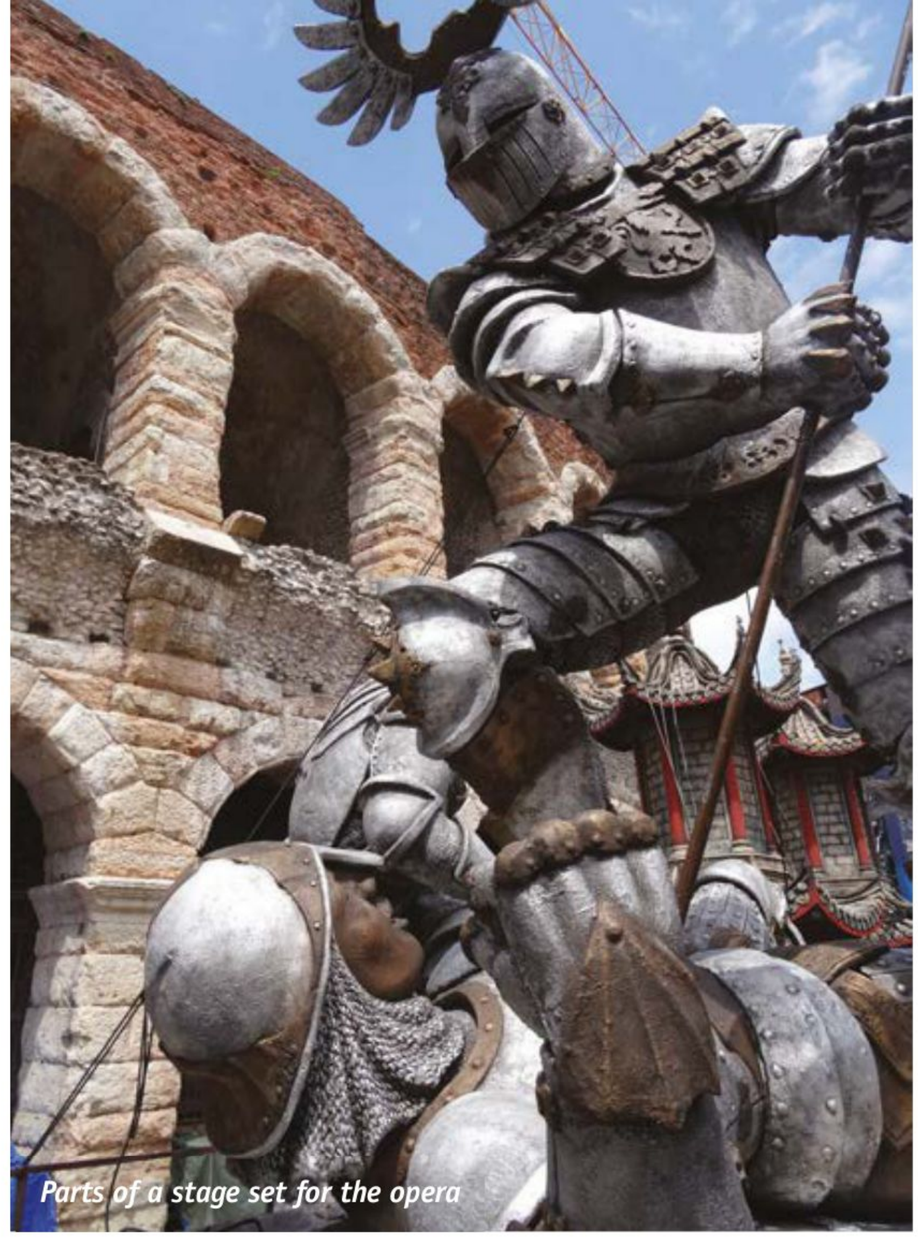
At sunset the village takes on a red glow, with its stones taking on the colour of the sun. Outside the church, lines etched onto the marble path indicate the location of Roman ruins. In the basement of the church there is a museum where prehistoric and Roman archaeological finds are kept.

In my short 48 hours in Verona, I realised I had experienced a lot of the main sights of the city, stayed in a beautiful bed and breakfast, and spent a fascinating day in the Valpolicella area. My parting thoughts turned again to Romeo, for whom there would be "no world without Verona", and I know that this historic city has now also found a place in my own heart. Ⓥ

GETTING THERE

➤ BY PLANE
Verona International Airport has UK and Ireland connections with Belfast, Cambridge, Dublin, Edinburgh, Leeds Bradford, London Gatwick, Manchester and Southampton. Check for updates as routes and airports can change.

➤ HIRE A BIKE
When you're there, check out the well-developed (and mercifully flat) cycle route along the River Adige between Verona and Lake Garda, to the north.


Parts of a stage set for the opera

The Archaeological Museum

Piazza della Erbe

Zyme's cave

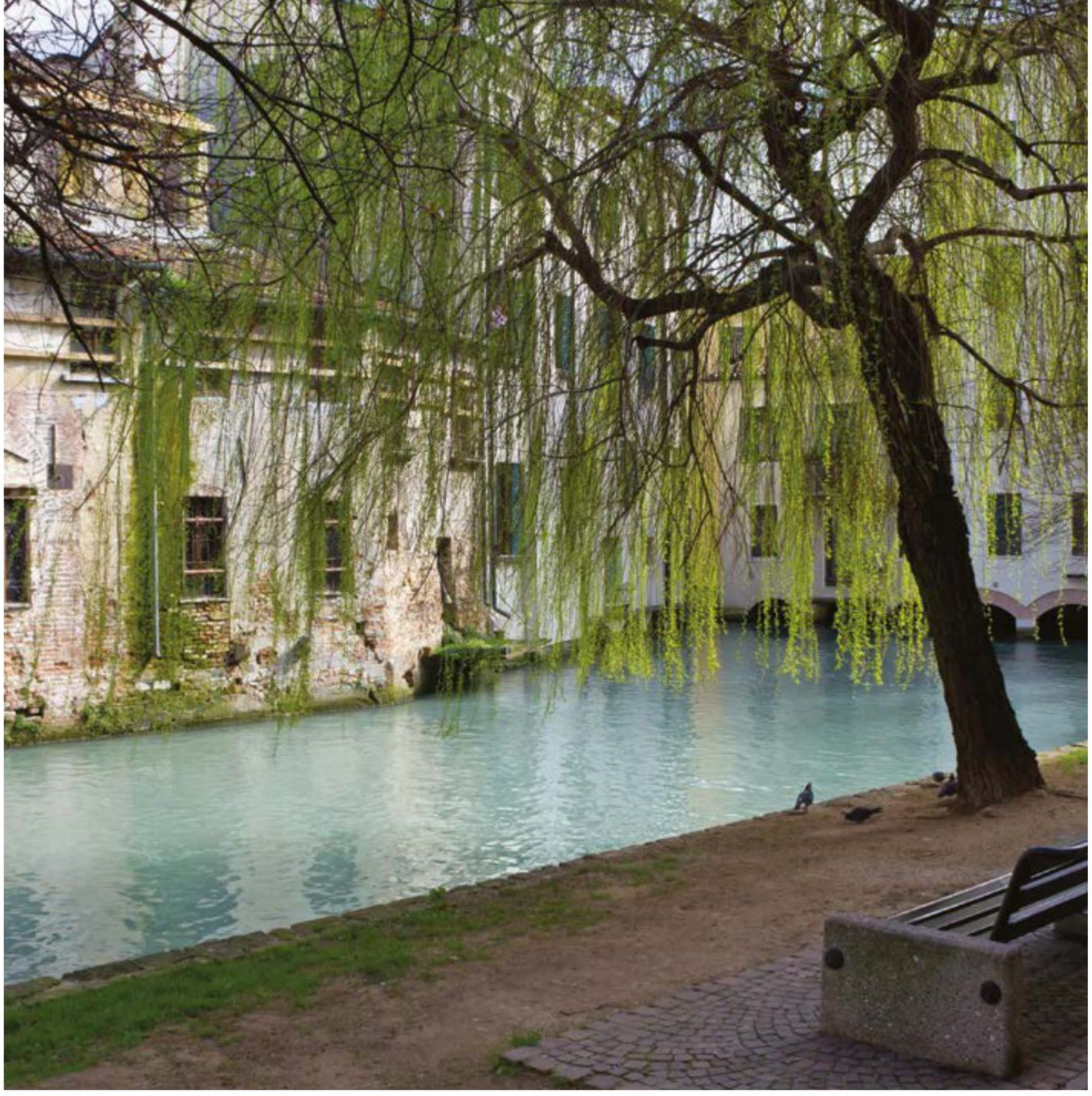
Grapes drying in the fruttaio

Villa Spinosa

IL PRATO DELLA VALLE

In the early 1600s, this area of Padua just outside the ancient city walls was a marshy swamp land – today it is the site of the largest public square in Italy…

The view of Padua's *Il Prato della Valle* you see here is of the canal, lined with statues, that encircles the oval park, *l'Isola Memmia*, at the centre of the piazza. American readers, by the way, will be interested to learn that, when it comes to public parks, it's the Europeans who do it big. Chicago's Millennium Park is slightly larger, but there is no other park in the USA anywhere near the size, though there are several in Europe, including one in sleepy old Cambridge, England. This is not a meadow as the Italian word *prato* implies but rather a huge square, one of the largest in Europe, which is why locals refer to it as "the meadow without grass". The square is surrounded by a picturesque canal with many sculptures representing notable personalities from the world of culture and art born in Padua or connected to the city. V



Clockwise from top left: La Piazza dei Signori; weeping willows flank the canals; floral displays reflect in the water; the red radicchio of Treviso; the city offers many secluded corners; the waterways are still very much in use; café tables line an arcade; Treviso is a city best experienced on foot

Images © iStock

48 HOURS IN...

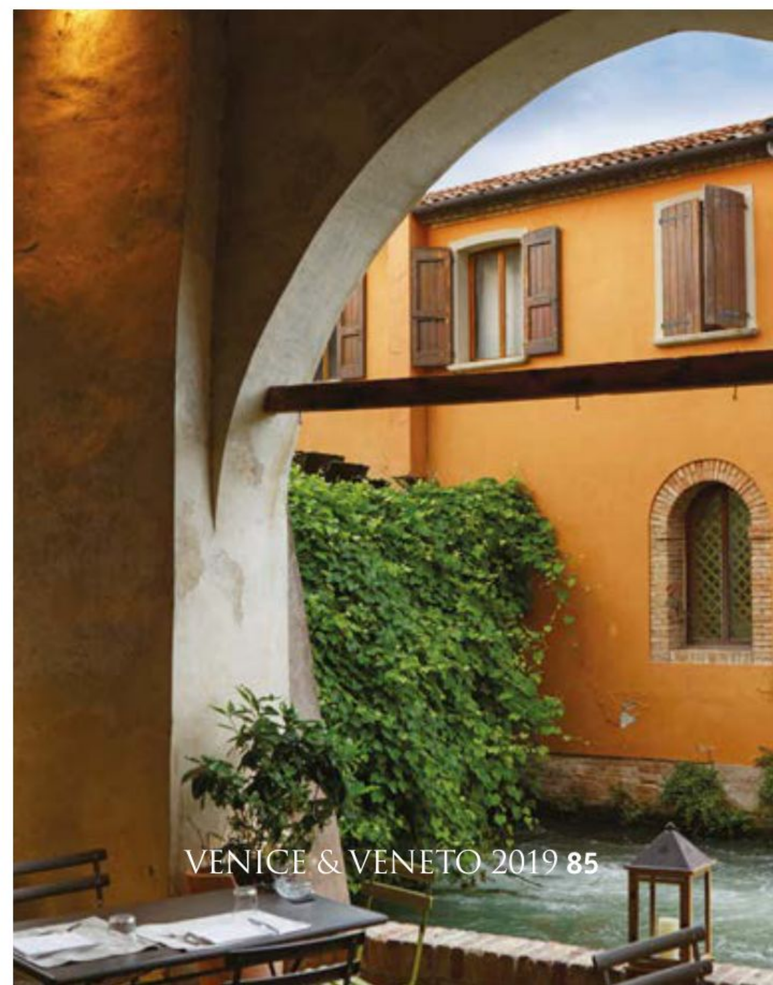
Treviso

Many travellers see no more than the city's airport, but Treviso – 'The Painted City' – has a lot to offer. **Sara Scarpa** avoids the tourist trail to visit one of the lesser lights of Veneto…

Treviso is a name familiar to the millions of travellers who arrive and depart the *bel paese* using the conveniently located airport in the heart of the Veneto region, yet unfortunately, few will recall the city with family and friends on their return home. Treviso is still predominately a stepping stone to the more established locations in the region such as Padova, Verona, Vicenza and the gem itself, Venice. Padova, with its world renowned university and lively nightlife, Verona, with its Roman amphitheatre and Juliet's balcony, Vicenza, the City of Andrea Palladio, and Venice, the floating jewel of Italy, surely give substance for jumping straight onto the coach or train once stepping outside the airport...

Well, in many ways they do. However, you will be one of thousands doing so and with that you will fall into the trap of merely being a sightseer, bagging a photograph at St Mark's square, below Juliet's balcony or in a gondola. Treviso offers something, certainly all year round, that the others will not: freedom, and a real sense of what it is to experience a major northern Italian city without hordes of tourists. It is a city that boasts its own beauty, charm and uniqueness. And of course, it is also the city that gave the world prosecco and tiramisù!

Treviso is extremely picturesque and still provides glimpses of its glorious history. The city is encircled by impressive 16th century walls and criss-



WHAT TO SEE AND DO

LA CHIESA DI SAN NICOLÒ ❶
Via San Nicolò, 50
☎ +39 0422 548626
www.parrocchietreviso.it
A fine example of Italian Gothic architecture. The stunning frescoes by Tomaso da Modena and his scholars date to the 14th century. In the chapter house of the Monastery of San Nicolò is another great fresco cycle by Tomaso da Modena (1352) – which covers the whole perimeter of the room – representing the famous saints of the Dominicans. The artist depicts three monks with reading aids, one wearing rivet spectacles, the second using a reading glass and the third a reading glass on a stand. This is believed to be the first ever depiction of people wearing glasses.

LA CHIESA DI SAN FRANCESCO ❷
Viale Sant'Antonio da Padova, 2
☎ +39 0422 582182
www.parrocchietreviso.it
This church, with its massive ship's keel roof dating back to the 13th century, houses the graves of Dante Alighieri's son and Francesco Petrarca's daughter.

DUOMO DI TREVISO ❸
Piazza del Duomo
www.parrocchietreviso.it
The Duomo di Treviso is Treviso's Cathedral. In its crypt you can admire extensive fragments of medieval frescoes but its masterpiece is the stunning *Malchiostro Annunciation*, one of Titian's finest works.

MUSEO SANTA CATERINA ❹
Piazzetta Mario Botter, 1
☎ +39 0422 658442
www.museicivicitreviso.it
The Museo Santa Caterina is a former church and a convent that has recently been restored to house the civic museum. Here, you will admire frescoes by Tomaso da Modena, an extensive archeological section and a gallery with 19th and 20th century paintings.

LOGGIA DEI CAVALIERI ❺
Via Martiri della Libertà
Situated on the corner of via Martiri della Libertà and via Indipendenza, in the heart of the historical centre of Treviso, the Loggia dei Cavalieri dates back to the 13th century. This peculiar building was originally used as a place reserved for the nobility to indulge in conversation, games and other pursuits.

CA' DEI CARRARESI ❻
Via Palestro, 33/38
Ca' Dei Carraresi is a stunning medieval building which now hosts important exhibitions and conferences.

La Chiesa di San Nicolò is the largest building in the city

DON'T MISS

TIRAMISÙ
This world famous dessert is said to have been invented in the 1970s by Ada Campoel, the former owner of a restaurant in the centre of Treviso called Alle Beccherie. She invented it with the help of her chef and the idea came from a dessert she used to eat as an energy boost while she was working and looking after her new born baby. Tiramisù means "pick-me-up" and with its layers of *savoiardi* (sponge fingers) dipped in coffee and a cream of eggs, mascarpone cheese and sugar, it certainly is.

crossed by small canals, where weeping willows appear almost to bow in homage to the beauty of the city. You will even find functioning water mills dotted along the canals and some art installations actually in the water.

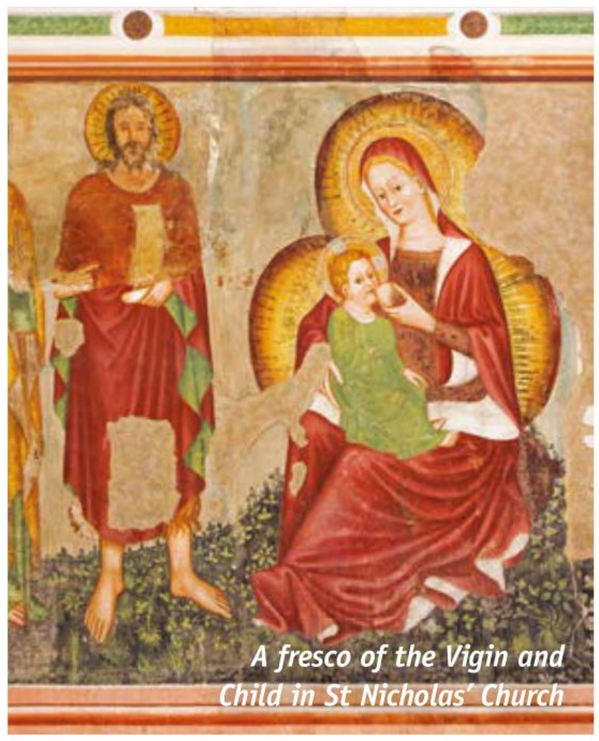
Like most medieval cities, the best way to experience it is definitely on foot – while strolling along the cobbled streets you can admire pretty Renaissance squares, long arcades, frescoed house façades and stunning palaces. The splendour of the frescoes on the façades of the buildings gave the town its other pretty nickname *urbs picta* – the painted city. Although they are faded now, some of these frescoes are still visible and if you close your eyes you can imagine their colourful former glory.

The centre is very easy to reach – a short walk from the railway will take you right at the heart of the city, Piazza dei Signori. Here, you will immediately notice the majestic Palazzo dei Trecento (capped with Guelph crenellations) which is the most significant example of Romanesque architecture in town, and the symbol of Treviso. The huge crack in the building's façade is "a fake", or better, just a reminder of where it was damaged by the American bombings in the Second World War.

On the north side of the square is the Palazzo del Podestà, dominated by the great tower (Torre del Comune). The square with its pretty cafés is the *salotto di Treviso* (Treviso's "drawing room") where all the locals tend to meet for a spritz and *ciacole* (gossip). In a courtyard tucked behind Piazza dei Signori, in the Galleria della Strada Romana, is a replica of the famous Fontana delle Tette (the original "Fountain of the Tits" is in the Palazzo dei Trecento). The statue is well known,

Like most medieval cities, the best way to experience Treviso is definitely on foot

The Porta San Tomaso and the city's 16th century walls



A fresco of the Vigin and Child in St Nicholas' Church

La Fontana delle Tette

as once, throughout all of the 16th century and up until the end of the Serenissima Republic (1797), it used to spill red and white wine from its breasts for three whole days after the election of each new mayor. This is where the Trevigiani (the residents of Treviso) could once drink wine for free while cheering the new Podestà and where nowadays young people take selfies holding its breasts.

Just around the corner is Via Calmaggiore, the best spot for shopping. This elegant street offers great shops in a super classy setting. However, I am a true believer that for some serious shopping you need concentration, and in order to concentrate great food is needed... So for me the morning is reserved only for window shopping as my stomach is (as always!) the priority!

Walking in direction of Piazza San Vito with my family, we were looking at the different restaurants and *osterie* in search of inspiration... We decided to stop to have lunch at Cantinetta Venegazzù as we liked the friendly atmosphere and the great selection of wines. We ordered several starters to share and some typical local dishes. Our favourites, for sure, the *porchetta* (spit-roasted pork) and the *radicchio rosso di Treviso* (a variety of chicory typical of the area). Just before leaving we started chatting with some of the locals. Alberto, a Trevigiano DOC, was super friendly. He offered to take us with him on a short tour of the town. With his paisley shirt and his big smile, he is truly a character and everybody in town seems to know him.

Alberto started telling us about the place just in front of the restaurant where we had lunch. Here is where allegedly, tiramisù was invented. At the beginning of the '70s, the then owner of the restaurant Le Beccherie, with the help of her chef, invented the recipe of one of the most famous desserts ever. We then stopped for a quick *macchiato* just near the house of the founder of the Benetton Empire. Alberto was keen to show us his favourite restaurants and osterie and so this early afternoon turned quickly into an unconventionally early Prosecco crawl. Every stop at an osteria needed to be properly cherished by a kindly offered glass of Prosecco.

DON'T MISS

LA PESCHERIA
The fish market is located in one of the most characteristic places in the old centre of Treviso, in the middle of a small river island in the Canale Cagnan. The morning market offers fresh fish, seasonal vegetables and a great social gathering.

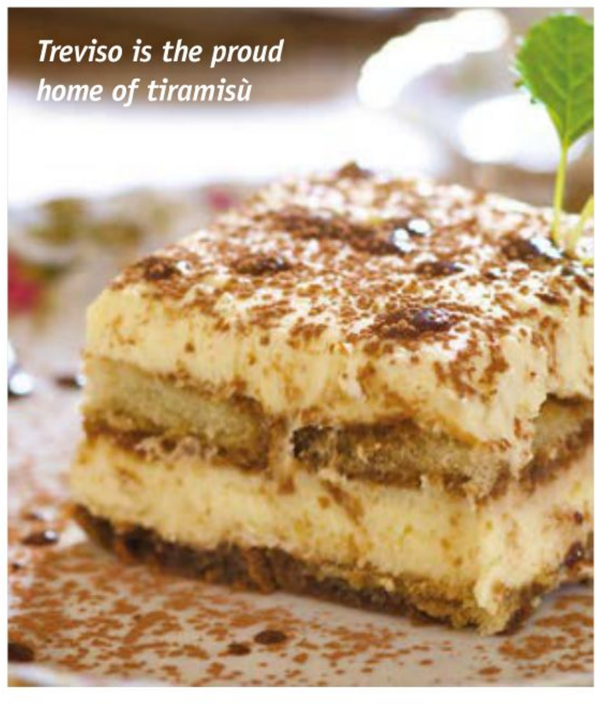
WHERE TO STAY

LOCANDA PONTE DANTE 7
Piazza Garibaldi, 6
☎ +39 0422 178 5946
www.locandapontedante.com
The Locanda is located in the centre of Treviso in a magnificent corner where the River Sile joins the Cagnan – *"dove Sile e Cagnan s'accompagna"*, as Dante wrote. The recently restored ancient structure is definitely full of charm. You must try the adjoining *osteria* offering excellent local dishes. This place is a little gem.

MAISON MATILDA 8
Via Jacopo Riccati, 44
☎ +39 348 0303369
www.maisonmatilda.com
This is a small luxury hotel located right in the centre of Treviso, near the Ca' dei Carraresi Museum and Piazza dei Signori. Kids up to 8 years old can stay for free. You can have breakfast at any time of the day and wherever you prefer!

ALBERGO IL FOCOLARE 9
Piazza Giannino Ancilotto, 4
☎ +39 0422 56601
www.ilfocolarehotel.com
A very pleasant hotel, right in the centre of Treviso, Il Focolare offers a warm welcome, and good old-fashined service. It's in a great location just off the main piazza and plenty of good restaurants are within strolling distance.

VILLA FIORITA 10
Via Giovanni XXIII
Monastier di Treviso
☎ +39 0422 898008
www.villafiorita.it
This hotel is located in a small village in the Venetian Villas area between Venice and Treviso (some 12 km from Treviso). Laid out in classic Venetian style, the villa is perfect if you are planning to relax in the park and swimming pool. Made famous by Ernest Hemingway's stay here.



Treviso is the proud home of tiramisù

WHERE TO EAT

CANTINETTA VENEGAZZÙ 11
Piazza Ancillotto Giannino, 2
☎ + 39 0422 052818
This *enoteca* (wine bar) offers a friendly atmosphere and a great selection of wines and fresh food. You can opt for *cicchetti* or you can sit down and enjoy a full hot meal.
€ €

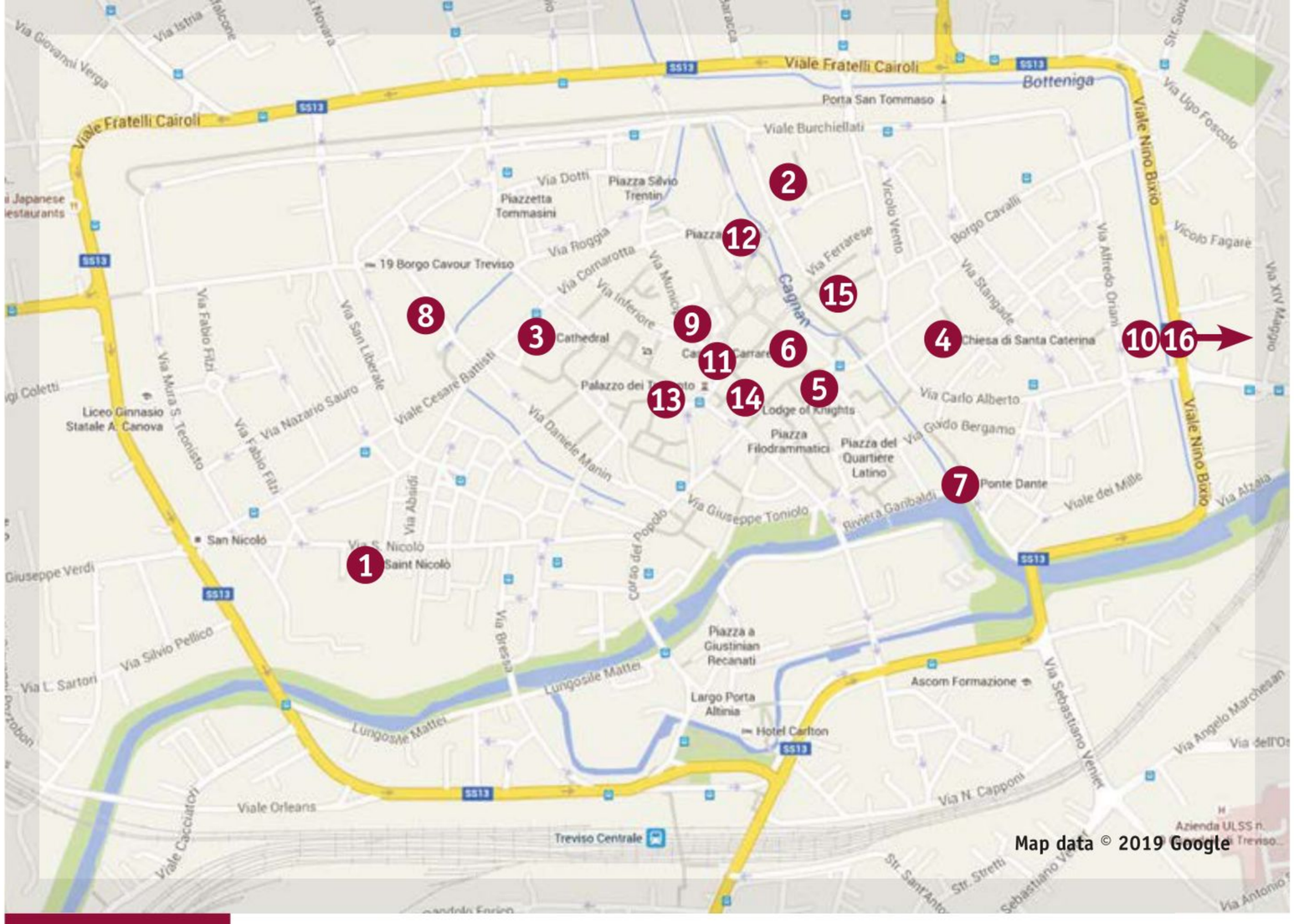
ODEON ALLA COLONNA 12
Vicolo Rinaldi, 3
☎ + 39 0422 541012
www.odeonlacolonna.it
In a magical quiet corner facing the river Cagnan, this restaurant offers a charming atmosphere. The historical building with its great interior design has a romantic outdoor area where you can dine al fresco.
€ €

OSTERIA DALLA GIGIA 13
Via Barberia, 20
☎ + 39 0422 582752
A busy *osteria* that has become an institution in Treviso. You will probably have to queue but it is worth it to enjoy the tasty *mozzarella in carrozza* – a golden-crust fried mozzarella sandwich – and the amazing *tramezzini*.
€ €

HOSTERIA DAI NANETI 14
Vicolo Broli, 2
☎ + 39 340 378 3158
www.dainaneti.it
This osteria, always packed with locals, has a great atmosphere and a unique character. Refuel yourself with the tasty *cicchetti* and a glass of wine.
€ €

OSTERIA MUSCOLI 15
Via Pescheria, 23
☎ + 39 0422 583390
Famous for the tasty hot *panino al prosecco* – a small, soft *panino* soaked in prosecco and then filled with mascarpone, Gorgonzola, formaggio latteria and mortadella.
€ €

RISTORANTE BASILISCO 16
Via Bison, 34
☎ + 39 0422 541822
www.ristorantebasilisco.com
The chef, Diego Tomasi, has great experience working in Venice, Milan, Florence, New York, London and France. He creates local traditional dishes presented in a modern way. His menu changes every day depending on the fresh local produce purchased in the morning. The restaurant's wine list has grown together with the kitchen and today includes around 370 different wines.
€ €



DON'T MISS

IL RADICCHIO ROSSO DI TREVISO
This is a member of the chicory family cultivated only in the area around Treviso. The designation IGP, given to both varieties, *tardivo* and *precoce*, refers to the EU regulation that allows only products grown within a designated area to use this product name. The different varieties of the red radicchio di Treviso are all the result of the patient process of whitening obtained by submerging the heads for several days after harvest in circulating spring water, a process that helped preserve the radicchio. Because of its white and red veining and the fact that it is seasonal, the radicchio is often described as a "winter flower" – it appears in the markets in late November.

In one of the osterie I was told that in order to see Treviso properly one must see it as locals do... I am still wondering if the guy who told me this meant that this is possible only after a few drinks or only with the relaxed pace of life and a smile on the face which is typical of the Trevigiani... Perhaps both!

We walked towards the Buranelli, the most picturesque corner in Treviso. The canal takes its name from the storehouse once owned by fishermen coming from the island of Burano, in the Venetian lagoon. The calm waterway, almost touched by the weeping willow, the long arcades, and the work of art by Mario Martinelli – which covers the wall of the house where the writer Giovanni Comisso once lived – create a lovely view that is the subject of many paintings.

Finally, we headed towards the town's walls and said goodbye to our wonderful guide. We then followed the green ring encircling the walls, looking at the swans and at some very cute ducklings hiding under their mum's wings.

The following day – after a relaxing evening dining at Odeon alla Colonna – we hired bikes and cycled for miles along the river, completely surrounded by nature. The itinerary, taking us all the way to Casale del Sile, starts from the place where the *burci* once used to stop. The burci were big wooden boats dragged by horses and oxen that used to transport goods from Venice to Treviso. The itinerary follows the path that was used by the animals along the River Sile. Midway along the path is a very interesting view: the "Cemetery of the Burci". This is the place where, in the '70s, all the boats were left to sink as a protest against the arrival of the road transport that stole their jobs. Today, this is a charming place when you can observe different species of birds and fish and just simply enjoy the beauty of nature.

Not only does Treviso offer a great historical centre, it also offers a perfect starting point to explore the panorama of the Marca Trevigiana (the area around Treviso). The place known as the original production area for Prosecco – the Prosecco Wine Route – is the most popular wine route in Italy. If you hire a car you will be able to discover the land between Conegliano and Valdobbiadene, which offers a patchwork of vineyards, stunning views with ancient castles, charming churches and noble villas. You can visit beautiful old villages and wineries where you will learn everything about the method of Prosecco making and you will test the superior quality of the world famous sparkling white wine. V

The land between Conegliano and Valdobbiadene offers a patchwork of vineyards

A monument commemorating a mention of Treviso in Dante's Commedia

The red radicchio makes many an appearance in the city's restaurants

Bicycles are common transport in Treviso

GETTING THERE

➤ **BY PLANE**
Currently Ryanair flies direct to Treviso from many UK airports, but check your local airport for the most up-to-date information.

➤ **BY TRAIN**
Treviso is well connected by rail to Venice and other cities in the Veneto region and beyond. For more details, visit www.trenitalia.it

The vineyards of Valdobbiadene

➤ **KEY TO RESTAURANT PRICES**
(full meal per person, not including wine)
€ Up to €25
€ € €26-€50
€ € € More than €50

VIEWPOINT

Known as the Gateway to the Dolomites, the **Luson Valley** is a hiker's paradise with a number of trails leading from here into the mountains that surround it...

The Germans call it Lüsen, as do its inhabitants. Though we are well inside the modern Italian border here, some 40km northeast of Bolzano, roughly the same northwest of Cortina d'Ampezzo, and at least half that distance to the nearest crossing into Austria, the people of Luson (in Italian) and the valley in which their *comune* (*Gemeinde*, in German) sits are almost all German speakers; fewer than one in 50 of the locals consider themselves native Italophones. One thousand metres above sea level, the *Lüsner Alm*, as the Germans call these pastures, give to the Zillertaler Alps (the *Alpi Aurine*, in Italian) to the north (seen here), the Ötztal Alps (*Alpi Venoste*) to the west, and the Dolomites to the south. The Peitlerkofel (*Sass de Putia*) and Aferer Geisler (just use the German, it's easier) hiking trails lead from here into the Dolomites, while there are also six Nordic Walking trails. (It's all right, you're not expected to speak Norwegian as well...) Do mark, however, that it can snow a bit round these parts in winter though. V

All photographs © Chris Allsop

Fresh Mountain Airs

Chris Allsop attends the Sound of the Dolomites festival for world-class music in a breath-taking natural setting, and then discovers the unspoiled gem known as 'Little Venice'...

The hills are alive with the sound of music. Except this is northeast Italy, not Austria, and it might be a tad rude – if not inaccurate – to label the soaring Dolomites as 'hills'. But there is certainly music, and at high elevation, which is all part of the annual Sound of the Dolomites festival.

Taking place each year over July and August, the Sound of the Dolomites (www.visittrentino.info/en/sounds-dolomites-festival) is a series of open-air concerts (classical, jazz, and world music) set amid the grassy amphitheatres and limestone sound stages of Trentino's mountainous north. Central to the festival's success is the participation of Mario Brunello, a world-class Italian cellist who revels in the "purity" of music-making among the lofty peaks.

As Brunello gets closer to nature, the festival allows the public to get closer to Brunello. For €355 (most festival events are free) attendees can hike through alpine splendour alongside the maestro – who totes his antique Maggini cello in a Ferrari-designed, carbon fibre hiking case. During the trek you pause for impromptu concerts on airy summits or as a pre-dinner treat in cosy mountain inns, before the journey culminates in a final, spectacular outdoor concert.

Which is why I had to dust off my rucksack, unnecessarily overload it with wet weather gear after misreading the forecast, and join Brunello for this year's musical/mountain foray.

THE WHITE WAR

To mark the centenary of the Great War, Brunello was joined in 2014 by the Signum Saxophone Quartet. Comprising a Slovenian, a Croatian and two German musicians, this melodious multi-national blend was designated the 'Peace Orchestra'. Furthermore, our path was to traverse a section of the Eastern Front – in these picturesque Alpine heights, Italians had doggedly fought the Austro-Hungarian army at altitudes frequently exceeding 2,000 metres and in often sub- ➤

To mark the centenary of the Great War, world-class Italian cellist Mario Brunello was joined in 2014 by the Signum Saxophone Quartet

Left: Mario Brunello hiking with his Ferrari-engineered cello case. Below: WW1 commemorative markers on Monte Pasubio

WHERE TO STAY AND EAT

CASA DEL PITTORE
Via Acquedotto 8
☎ +39 0464 486856
www.casadelpittore.it
The four-star Casa Del Pittore has the atmosphere of a boutique hotel combined with the warmth of a B&B, thanks to the gracious hospitality of owners Eliana and Roberto. Perched in a tranquil spot a very manageable ten minute walk from the city centre, prices for double rooms start from around €80 and include a delicious buffet breakfast featuring Eliana and Roberto's homemade cakes.

HOTEL ROVERETO
Corso Rosmini 82/D
☎ +39 0464 435222
www.hotelrovereto.it
Charming three star located within easy walking distance of Rovereto's main tourist draws and the train station. Book a comfortable double room (breakfast extra), with views of the mountains or the Old Town available.

RESIDENCE DEL MESSAGGERO
Vicolo del Messaggero 6-11
☎ +39 0464 489120
www.residencemessaggero.it
Modern and comfortable self-catering apartments available to rent in the city centre. Ideal for families and larger groups, or simply if you don't want to be confined in a hotel.

RESTAURANT LA TERRAZZA SUL LENO
Via Setaioli 2
☎ +39 0464 435151
www.laterrazzasulleno.it
Best pizza in town – wood-fired and good value. Enjoy it al fresco on the comfortable terrace with views over the River Leno. The restaurant fills with locals on the weekend, so be sure to arrive early or reserve wisely. Cost for two dining with a bottle of wine: €70 (€30 if just two eating pizza).

RESTAURANT 900 DELL'HOTEL ROVERETO
Corso Rosmini 82/D
☎ +39 0464 435454
www.hotelrovereto.it
With its colourful interior and relaxed ambiance, Restaurant 900 is a popular choice with the locals. The menu offers regional as well as national dishes, and the homemade pasta using organic flour is melt in the mouth delicious. It also offers deepish dish sourdough pizza that is a brave and tasty departure from the national norm.

OSTERIA DEL PETTIROSSO
Corso Bettini 24
☎ +39 0464 422463
www.osteriadelpettirosso.it
Restaurant and wine bar about five minutes' walk from the MART. With 500 wines on the list and regional tipples taking pride of place, this is the place to explore Trentino's viticultural tastescape.

Clockwise from top left: An impromptu concert at Rifugio Achille Papa; a concert in a war-carved crater on Monte Pasubio; the Signum Saxophone Quartet accompanied Brunello; trumpet gentians; hiking the man-made tunnels of the White War; talks and tunnels on the former front line

zero conditions – a three-year attritional engagement called *la Guerra Bianca*, or White War. As we walked, I chatted with members of our 58-strong group. Sergio from Genoa – a die-hard, middle-aged Sound of the Dolomites lifer – has made a number of close friends from all over the country through his 20 years of loyal festival going. Others asked for an explanation of my overstuffed rucksack. "When Mario is with us," local Maddalena responded, "it does not rain." Maddalena's female friends laughed, and I began to understand why silver fox Brunello's wife was also on the hike…

Our first impromptu classical concert took place in a ragged roofed cave (beat that, Beatles) with surprisingly good acoustics – one of 52 tunnels carved into the Monte Pasubio mountainside by the Italian army in 1916. The tunnels, known as the 'Road of the First Army Corps', are one feature of the wider Parco della Memoria or Great War Memorial Park of Trentino, the umbrella term covering the region's visible wartime legacy.

Trails crisscross the park, including the 500km Peace Path that hugs the former front line. Along its route you'll encounter abandoned artillery, gravity-defying forts clinging to rock walls, as well as used cartridges and fragments from soldiers' boots scattered amid the tiny amethyst, yellow, and powder blue flowers that border the trails.

Over the first two days, we enjoyed three more impromptu concerts – one in a bomb-carved crater; one in a rifugio (traditional Alpine lodge) dining room; and another packed into a tiny church. The rifugios (the first, Achille Papa, named after a WW1 general) were wood-panelled and snug, serving up flasks of wine, pizza antipasti, and hearty mains of venison sausage, tangy sauerkraut, and polenta that reminded you of your arrival at a cultural intersection of Europe.

From Achille Papa, bristling peaks smoothed away into lush green foothills that marked the border with neighbouring Veneto province. We tramped down from the heights into soft Alpine

Our first impromptu classical concert took place in a ragged roofed cave (beat that, Beatles) with surprisingly good acoustics

meadows thick with dwarf pine (prized for homemade schnapps and sore throat remedies), vivid blue trumpet gentians, and drifts of rosemary.

The final gig was on the afternoon of the third day. Despite it being a Thursday, a 1,000-strong audience of hikers and cyclists began to gather in the garden of Rifugio Vincenzo Lancia and its surrounding countryside. Beers were swigged in the sunshine and friends greeted one another while the musicians set up.

Brunello and Signum treated us to a set list of pieces written between 1914 and 1918 by artists such as Stravinsky and Haydn, before concluding with a sombrely beautiful composition by George Butterworth, a promising English composer who was killed in action at the Somme. According to Maddalena's friend, Isabella, there wasn't a dry eye among her party by the concert's close.

EXPLORING ROVERETO

At the end of the concert we hiked to our minibus for the return journey to Rovereto, Trentino's unspoiled second city. Often overlooked in favour of larger, more northerly Trento (recently voted Italy's 'Best City for Quality of Life' by Italian daily *Il Sole 24 Ore*) this works in Rovereto's favour, by thinning out the numbers of tourists and maintaining the city's attractive insouciance.

Lying in a terraced valley and surrounded by peaks, Rovereto is a picturesque one-hour drive up the vine-carpeted Lagarina Valley from Verona airport. You can't miss the striking Castello di Avio, sliding down the valley walls like a Dali clock (less distinct, but no less evocative is a rocky hillside on your right as you approach the city: Dante designated this an entrance to hell in his *Inferno*).

A city of art, war, and cycling, Rovereto's residents zip around the streets on road bikes, and you can join them by hiring a bicycle from the e.motion stands dotted around town. Find one by the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art of Trento and Rovereto, known more succinctly as the MART, and one of the city's major tourism draws (the MART has recently been joined by Trento's MUSE: a science museum designed by Renzo Piano).

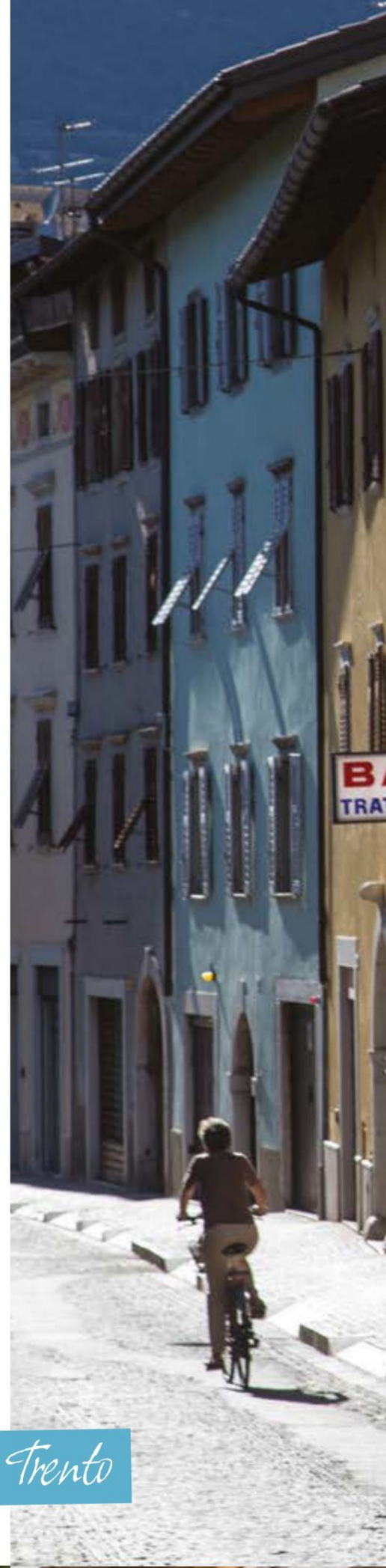
Opened in 2002, the MART houses a collection of international stature, but do look out too for works by the futurist artist Fortunato Depero, a local whose caryatid sculpture can be seen gilding a hat shop façade in the beautifully preserved Old Town.

AN EMBEDDED HISTORY

In fact, as you stroll around the compact Old Town, you come across numerous hints – like Depero's sculpture, for example – of Rovereto's historical and cultural legacy. Daubs of tell-tale Venetian chequer swell up on alley walls like refined street art, ready reminders that the city used to be a part of the Venetian Empire – the Old Town is often referred to as 'Little Venice' for its architectural echoes of La Serenissima. Shells embedded in walls commemorate the city's war-torn past: during WW1, the front line once split Rovereto right down the middle.

You can learn about the history (provided you can read Italian) at the 14th century Castello di

At the end of the concert, we hiked to our minibus for the return journey to Rovereto, Trentino's unspoiled second city – often overlooked in favour of more northerly Trento



Rovereto that looms above the Old Town, now the exhibition space for the superb and exhaustive Italian War History Museum.

A marble plaque found in Via Mercerie commemorates the site where Mozart performed his first ever concert in Italy, in 1769 – apparently, Rovereto was a favourite with the Mozarts, as was the regional red wine, Marzemino. Procure a bottle next door from the eclectic Drogheri Giuseppe Micheli, while the deli opposite is the perfect spot to taste test the local Grana Trentino hard cheese. For coffee, find Piazza Cesare Battisti with its distinctive Neptune fountain and where the café, like most in the Old Town, seems perfectly positioned to glory in the warm afternoon light. Your velvety macchiato will be made with Bontadi beans: headquartered in Rovereto, this is Italy's oldest coffee brand, its rich, roasting aromas a fixture in the backstreets since 1790.

But, ultimately, you can't escape the legacy of war in Rovereto… or the music. Perched on a hillside above the city is the gargantuan Bell of the Fallen, a tolling bell memorial fashioned from melted down Great War artillery. Its regular, sonorous tones echo off the valley walls as dusk descends, its peals a plea to hit the bars, order a Negroni, and make some new friends. Ⓥ

Clockwise from left: Colourful Via Niccolo Paganini near the MART; Friday morning coffee in Piazza Cesare Battisti, by the Fountain of Neptune; the Rovereto bell tower and part of the castle wall; a statue of Mary and Jesus outside the Church of St Mark; concert goers arrived by a variety of means of transport

GETTING THERE

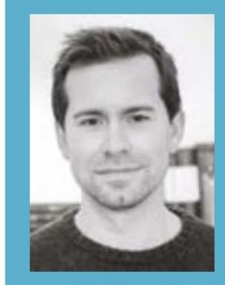
➤ Verona is the closest airport to Rovereto. EasyJet flies regularly from Gatwick, KLM and Air France from Birmingham, and Lufthansa from Manchester. Upon arrival, those travelling by train can catch the regular shuttle bus service from the airport to Verona railway station and jump on the north running Bolzano train (an hour and a half journey). Those with rental cars can take the A22 toll road for the quickest route at just under an hour.

INFORMATION

➤ **www.visittrentino.it**
General Trentino tourism website that covers the entire region: from the Alps to the Mediterranean; from the crisp mountain air of the Dolomites to the mild, balmy climate of Lake Garda.

➤ **www.visitrovereto.it**
More location-specific tourism website that concentrates on the town of Rovereto and the surrounding district of Vallagarina (known in German as Lagertal). Holiday offers; arts and culture; mountains in summer; mountains in winter.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Chris Allsop is a freelance writer and photographer. He's probably more what the Italians would call a "Sunday walker" and was glad to be able to keep up while hiking with musicians in the Trentino Dolomites.

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Photograph © Provincia di Ferrara - Massimo Baraldi

Whispers in Ferrara

Just over the border in Emilia-Romagna, **Joe Gartman** reveals ghosts of long-gone rulers and clergymen who left unfinished business...

Ghosts don't exist, I am inclined to believe, but the atmosphere of Ferrara is distinctly eerie. Maybe it's the mist floating in from the Po Delta, to east of the city, where the great river meanders and splits and empties, multi-mouthed, into the Adriatic Sea. Maybe it's the dark and gloomy streets of the medieval section around Via Volte, or maybe it's the dungeons of Castello Estense, with their heavy iron doors and walls filled with despairing graffiti.

Don't get me wrong. I like the town very much, especially when the sun shines; and in fairness I must mention the excellent example of town planning called the "Herculean addition" that added many grand *palazzi* in Renaissance style back in the 15th century. (The name is not in honour of the mythical strongman but the city's ruler at the time, Ercole I d'Este. But I'm sure Ercole himself was named after the big guy with the club and lion's pelt.)

Since there are no hills to negotiate everybody, including great-grandma, rides a bike; and for the same reason, Ferrara is a great walking city, as long as your hearing is acute enough to pick up the whisper of bike tires approaching from behind. It would be embarrassing to be flattened by a granny in a hurry. If you're the imaginative sort, you might also hear the whisper of a disembodied voice from the past; because memories of unforgettable characters lurk, ghost-like, around every corner in Ferrara.

Our B&B on Via Scandiana, for example, is just a hundred yards or so from Palazzo Schifanoia, one of the *delizie* – suburban getaways – of the Este family, who ruled Ferrara from the 12th century until it was absorbed into the Papal States in 1597. It's a good neighbourhood for memories, even if it has deteriorated a little since the days when the royals hung out down the street. We found a friendly bar at the corner, owned by a kindly lady who gave us careful directions to the nearest laundromat (way across town) and then offered to take us there in her car. The regular patrons listened in, added their recommendations, gulped their *caffè* quickly at the counter and then adjourned to the sidewalk outside to smoke and gossip.

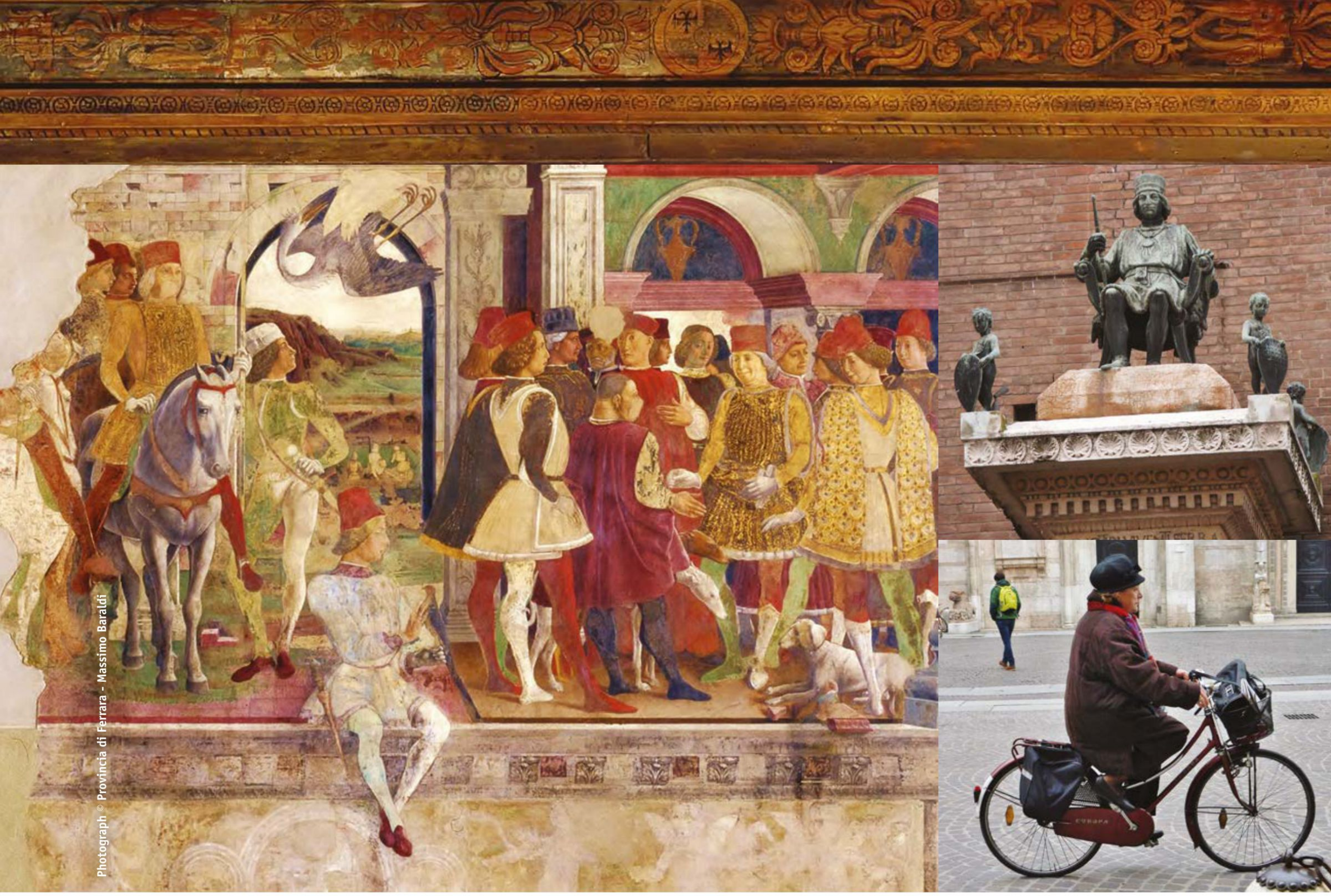
THE GOOD DUKE BORSO

We decided to postpone washday and visit Schifanoia instead. The palazzo's name derives from *schivare la noia* – "avoid boredom". No doubt there was a lot of bureaucratic tedium back at the castle. In those days, around 1385, the area was green and wooded, giving the family enough privacy to throw a proper party now and then. Later, around 1470, the little getaway was expanded under Duke Borso d'Este. He wanted a suitably impressive hall upstairs where he could entertain visiting VIPs, like Pope Paul II, who crowned Borso Duke of Ferrara in 1471.

This hall is now known as the *Salone dei Mesi* (Hall of the Months)

Clockwise from top left: The bicycle is the preferred means of city transport for most locals; fresco in Palazzo Schifanoia; the Good Duke Borso; yes, everyone cycles in Ferrara

Photography by Pat Gartman unless otherwise stated



Photograph © Provincia di Ferrara - Massimo Baraldi

for the fresco cycle it contains. It's an impressively spacious room, empty now except for a couple of benches for contemplation or massaging your feet. Once, all twelve months were represented on the four walls, but half of them are either gone completely, or too faint to enjoy. It seems that later owners of the building plastered them over! Happily, the remaining pictures are in reasonably good shape considering they're well over 500 years old.

The decorative scheme is based on zodiacal signs and pagan figures of each month's protective god. April, for example, honours Venus, who is shown arriving in a sumptuous river barge drawn by swans, while a large family of rabbits (of course) frisk on the bank.

Below these fanciful allegories, Borso's artists, Cosmé Tura, Francesco del Cossa and others, have created wonderful scenes of Renaissance life in Ferrara, all depicting activities appropriate to the current month. The Ferrarese painters gloried in colour, and the lively scenes of lovers and merchants and musicians disporting themselves among detailed Renaissance architecture, and gardens filled with flowers, are still splendid; but what they must have looked like when new! The frescoes are cheerful and full of life: women gowned in gorgeous fabrics, men in their parti-coloured hose and doublets, painted with dazzling skill.

Clearly the pictures extol the benefits of good government, and to drive the message home, Borso figures in each of the scenes, looking benevolent, handing out small change, or just checking to make sure everyone's having a good time. He is painted each time with the same expression, a kind of avuncular half-smile, looking just a little bit goofy with it. Come to think of it, his statue outside city hall is the same. It's a look that seems to say, "Hey, don't worry, it's just me, kindly old Uncle Borso. Don't believe all those rumours about dungeons in the castle. It's only a root cellar."

WHERE TO STAY

➤ B&B DELIZIE ESTENSE
Via Scandiana, 5
☎ +39 335 752 0153
www.deliziaestense.com
Small apartments with kitchen corners. Great location near Palazzo Schifanoia, Casa Romei, Santa Maria in Vado, Palazzina Marfisa d'Este, and Corpus Domini Convent. Free bicycles available for guests.

➤ HOTEL DE PRATI
Via Padiglioni, 5
☎ +39 0532 241905
www.hoteldeprati.com
With 17 comfortable rooms, this historic hotel is convenient for the Estense Castle, the Diamond Palace and the City Theatre.

➤ HOTEL ANNUNZIATA
Piazza Repubblica, 5
☎ +39 0532 201111
www.annuziata.it
Modern, stylish and extremely well-maintained hotel, right next to Castello Estense. Helpful, very professional staff. Outstanding, varied buffet breakfast (you can even download their WOW! Breakfast menu). Guests can borrow bikes here, too!

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

CATTEDRALE DI FERRARA
Piazza della Cattedrale
☎ +39 0532 207449
At the time of publication, the cathedral is closed for restoration. Check for details.

MUSEO DELLA CATTEDRALE
Via San Romano, 1
☎ +39 0532 244949
Hours: 9:30am-1:00pm and 3:00pm-6:00pm. Closed Mondays.

MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO NAZIONALE DI FERRARA
Via XX Settembre, 122
☎ +39 0532 66299
www.archeoferrara.beniculturali.it/
Opening times: Tuesday-Sunday 9.30am-5pm. Closed Mondays.

CASA DI LUDOVICO ARIOSTO
Via Ludovico Ariosto, 67
☎ +39 0532 244949
Designed by Girolamo da Carpi for 16th-century author Ariosto. Open Tues-Sun 10am-12.30pm and 4-6pm. Closed Mondays.

TEATRO COMUNALE DI FERRARA
Corso Martiri della Liberta, 5
☎ +39 0532 218311
www.teatrocomunaleferrara.it
Opera season is February to May. Check website for opera dates, and for dance, music and other performances.

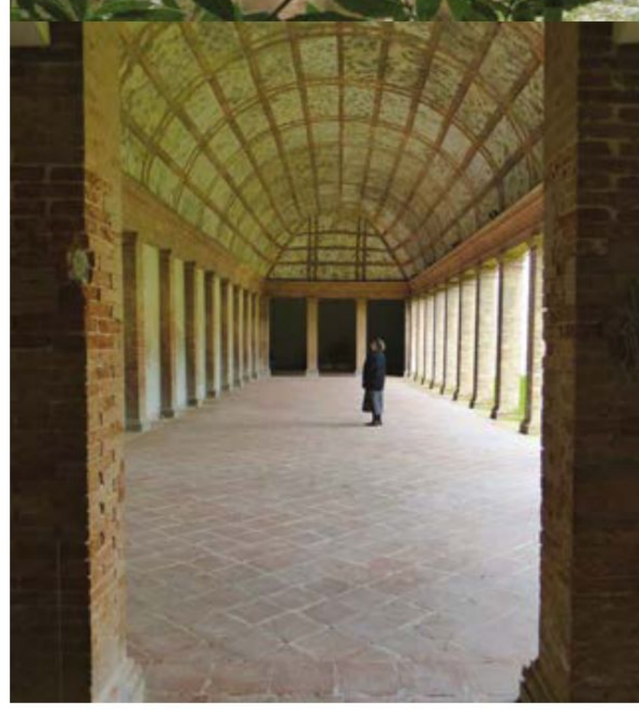
CITY WALLS
There are nine kilometres of walls encircling the historical centre of Ferrara. You can bike or walk the park-like route on the embankments or below the walls.

VIA DELLE VOLTE AND OLDEST MEDIEVAL STREETS
Via delle Volte is named for the vaulted arches linking buildings on each side of the street. Other atmospheric streets of the era are Via Giuoco del Pallone, Via Carlo Mayr, Via Belfiore and Via Coperta.

GETTING THERE

➤ BY PLANE
The nearest airport is Bologna. There is a 'Bus & Fly' transfer service to and from Ferrara – 60 minutes. Trains from Bologna Centrale to Ferrara take 30-45 minutes. The driving distance from Bologna to Ferrara is 52 km.

➤ BY TRAIN
There are direct trains to and from Rome, Florence, Venice, and Naples, among others. The main station is not far from the Castello, and city buses depart from just outside the station entrance.



Perhaps he was telling the truth. He was known as "Good Duke Borso" after his death. Some of his artists, though, complained that he was a slow payer.

GENII LOCORUM – THE SPIRITS OF PLACES

Across the street from the bar is the church of Santa Maria in Vado, site of a miracle in March, 1171, when, during Mass, blood spurted from the host so prodigiously that it stained the vault above the altar. You can visit and perhaps see the miraculous stain, although, like many buildings in Ferrara, the church was badly damaged during the 2012 earthquakes and may be closed.

There are a couple of other aristocratic buildings in our neighbourhood, including a small *palazzina* that belonged to Marfisa d'Este, who inherited it from her father, Francesco d'Este. She refused to leave when the Este family fell from power, and apparently lived there untroubled until her death. It contains paintings and furniture from the 16th century, and has a pleasant garden to enjoy, complete with a frescoed *loggia*.

Just around the corner is a beautiful and well-preserved Renaissance palace, the Casa Romei, with elegant loggias surrounding the cortile, a frescoed "Room of the Sibyls", and a grand terracotta fireplace. It was the home of Giovanni Romei, a local aristocrat, who willed it to the nuns of Corpus Domini. Later, Cardinal Ippolito II d'Este had it renovated so that part of it would serve as his private apartments. (If you have ever enjoyed the fountains of Villa d'Este in Tivoli, you have already visited another of Ippolito's residences.)

THE PERILS OF LUCREZIA

Ippolito was a son of Lucrezia Borgia, born when she was Duchess of Ferrara and wife of Alfonso I d'Este. Of all the ghosts in Ferrara, she's the shade I'd most like to interview. Was she really a deadly femme fatale

Clockwise from top left: Pleasant gardens at the Palazzina Marfisa d'Este; the city's medieval origins are still very much in evidence; the Renaissance palazzo of Casa Romei; vase in the Archeological Museum; Via Mazzini, where cyclists and pedestrians happily share the road; portico in the Palazzina Marfisa d'Este

or merely the victim of her father's unscrupulous machinations and the mudslinging of his enemies? Her father was Pope Alexander VI, Rodrigo Borgia. (Alexander had four children, including the notorious Cesare Borgia, by his mistress Vanozza dei Cattanei. The Pope acknowledged them openly. There was no fol-de-rol about "nieces and nephews" for Rodrigo.)

Lucrezia was married three times, each match arranged by her father to suit his political and familial ambitions. When the first two marriages ceased to be useful to him, they were ended by rather unusual means: the first, to Giovanni Sforza, was annulled when Giovanni "confessed", under pressure, to impotence; the second ended when her young husband, Alfonso of Aragon, was strangled to death, probably by Lucrezia's ruthless brother Cesare.

Lucrezia was the focus of a maelstrom of gossip and rumour: was she pregnant when her first marriage was annulled? Was there a child? Who was the father? Why did two servants from the Borgia household drown in the Tiber? Was it true that Lucrezia had improper relations with Cesare, or even Alexander himself? Did she really wear a ring full of poison, and empty it into the soup of the day when necessary?

Her third marriage, to Duke Alfonso I d'Este, took her out of the Roman spotlight and brought her to Ferrara. Here, as Duchess, she was popular and respected. Even so, there were still rumours. The Duke had a roving eye, and perhaps Lucrezia returned the favour. She and Francesco II Gonzaga, ruler of Mantua, may have had an affair. Francesco was the husband of Isabella d'Este, Alfonso's sister. She also exchanged passionate letters with the poet and Cardinal, Pietro Bembo, and was an ardent pen-pal of the poet Ariosto. Still, she and Duke Alfonso had seven or perhaps eight children, although only four survived to adulthood. Lucrezia died from complications of childbirth at the yuong age of 39.

Duke Alfonso was a chap who evidently liked to take chances. Besides marrying a girl who had a bad reputation in the kitchen, he also got on the wrong side of Pope Julius II by supporting France and Spain against the Papal territorial claims. Julius excommunicated him in 1509. However, Alfonso was a great patron of the arts, both literary and visual, attracting poets like Bembo and Ariosto, and commissioning paintings from Giovanni Bellini and Titian. He also outlived Julius.

Lucrezia and Alfonso's grandson, the later Duke Alfonso II, is thought to be the subject of Robert Browning's poem *My Last Duchess*, about a nobleman who murders his young wife. Alfonso II's first wife died at 17, either from tuberculosis or, it was strongly suspected at the time, poison.

There are, of course, several places in Ferrara where you might hope to encounter the spectres of

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

CASTELLO ESTENSE
Largo Castello, 1
☎ +39 0532 299233
www.castelloestense.it
Opening hours vary by season – check the website for details.

PALAZZO SCHIFANOIA
Via Scandiana, 23
☎ + 39 0532 244949
www.artecultura.fe.it/159/museo-schifanoia
Currently closed for restoration, reopens in 2020. Check website for details.

PINACOTECA NAZIONALE DI FERRARA
Palazzo dei Diamanti, Corso Ercole I d'Este, 21
☎ +39 0532 205844
www.gallerie-estensi.beniculturali.it/pinacoteca-nazionale/
Stunning collection of Ferrenese art from the second to the 18th century. Open Tues-Sun 10am-5.30pm. Closed Mondays.

CHIESA & MONASTERO CORPUS DOMINI
Via Pergolato, 4
☎ +39 0532 207825
Where many of the d'Este family are buried. Ring the bell at the Convent door. You'll probably get a present as you leave – the kind of small breads that St Caterina de' Vigri used to bake. A donation is appreciated.

CASA ROMEI
Via Savonarola, 30
☎ +39 0532 234130
A well-preserved stately home from the 16th century, built by Giovanni Romei, a member of the Este court in Ferrara.

CHIESA DI SANTA MARIA IN VADO
Via Borgovado, 3
☎ +39 0532 65127
The church was damaged in the 2012 earthquakes and is still being repaired as funding is available. Open irregularly when structural work allows, call before going.

INFORMATION

➤ **The Main Tourist Information Office is in the courtyard of Castello Estense ☎ +39 0532 209370 www.ferrarainfo.com**

➤ **Ferrara Terra e Acqua www.ferraraterraeacqua.it has details on most tourist attractions in the province**

➤ **A list of bike rental agencies can be found at: www.ferraraterraeacqua.it/en/travel/getting-around**

both Lucrezia and Alfonso. One is the Castello Estense, still sitting massively in its moat, in the centre of town. It's been there since 1385, and seems impregnable. But it, too, was damaged in the earthquakes of 2012. Nowadays its perimeter is guarded, not by the Duke's soldiers, but by a fellow in a rowboat who patrols the moat picking up floating candy wrappers. The dungeons are still there, however. You can visit them if you like. Don't let that door slam shut behind you!

The cells were sometimes occupied by family – Duke Alfonso shut two of his brothers, Ferrante and Giulio, in the castle's tower, Torre dei Leoni, for plotting against him. Ferrante died in his cell after 34 years, but Giulio was released by a later Duke after 53 years in the tower.

VOWS OF SILENCE

A few minutes' walk from our B&B, in Via Pergolata, we found another reminder of the Duke and Duchess – the Church and Convent of Corpus Domini, home to a community of the Poor Clares. Several members of the Este family are buried there. We wanted to see Lucrezia's tomb, and rang a bell at the Convent entrance door. An actual disembodied voice – this one issued from an intercom box – directed us to the church door. In the dimly lit Baroque interior, we spotted a figure in brown and white behind a grille in the left aisle, near the apse.

She greeted us charmingly, smiled knowingly when we mentioned Lucrezia's tomb, and sent for help. Help arrived – a small and energetic fellow who pretended we had come to learn the life story of St Catherine de'Vigri, the founder of the monastery. She was a mystic, a writer, and an expert baker – her ancient ovens still operate in the convent. She lived her later years in Bologna, where her incorrupt remains, dressed in her habit and seated on a throne, can be seen in Bologna's Corpus Domini Church. I must remember to visit when I next go to Bologna.

At last, and with a twinkle in his eye, our host showed us six marble ➤

This page: The Castello Estense has been standing since the 14th century, but though it doesn't show in this image, it too suffered damage in the recent earthquake; the castle's dungeons however, remain, intact – and have many stories to tell. Opposite: Inside the Castello today

Photograph © Provincia di Ferrara - Massimo Baraldi

Clockwise from top left: Interior of the Corpus Domini Convent; the diamond-shaped brickwork on the wall of the Palazzo dei Diamanti; the Cathedral dominates the main square; Piazza Trento e Trieste, where small shops cuddle up to the church's flanks; the National Art Gallery in the Palazzo dei Diamanti; Girolamo Savonarola, scourge of wickedness and the city's favourite son

slabs, with worn inscriptions, in the nun's choir. "Lvcretie Borgie" is carved on one, along with the Duke's name and those of two of their children. I listened for a voice, but Lucrezia wasn't talking.

THE SCOURGE OF WICKEDNESS

Girolamo Savonarola was born in Ferrara in 1452, and is a bit of a favourite son despite some bother he got into in Florence. He denounced the sins of Pope Alexander, the Medici, and just about everybody else; he gained control of Florence, lit bonfires fuelled with books and paintings, and finally was hanged and burned in Piazza Signoria.

A statue of the fiery (in more ways than one) preacher, showing him in full oratorical flight, stands near the castle in – appropriately – Piazza Savonarola. It was erected in 1875. An inscription on the plinth says, "To Girolamo Savonarola, in corrupt and servile times of vice and tyranny, the scourge!"

As Savonarola himself would probably declare, if he was still sermonizing: *Sic transit gloria mundi* – Thus passes worldly the glory.

But not *all* the glory of the world has faded, certainly not in Ferrara. Out in the Herculean Addition, the Palazzo dei Diamanti still sparkles in the sun. The building is named for the diamond-shaped stones that make up the façades – three-dimensional diamond shapes, I mean. Their points protrude, and it almost seems that the Renaissance architect, Biagio Rossetti, invented the world's first climbing wall. I suggest going inside instead. You'll find Ferrara's National Picture Gallery, with paintings by artists of the Ferrarese School, such as Cosmé Tura and Ercole dei Roberti.

And of course, the Cathedral of Ferrara dominates the main square, with its splendid Romanesque and Gothic marble façade. The interior is mostly Baroque restoration. In Piazza Trento e Trieste, small shops cuddle up to the great church's flanks. Nearby, the excellent Cathedral Museum holds a rare treasure, the exquisite white marble sculpture of the *Madonna della Melagrana* (Madonna of the Pomegranate) by Jacopo della Quercia from 1408, an unforgettable masterpiece.

Ferrara has much more to see and do – six miles of 15th-century walls can be hiked or biked; there's a fine archaeological museum housed in a palace built by Ludovico il Moro's ambassador, Antonio Costabili; poetry lovers can visit Ludovico Ariosto's house, where he worked on *Orlando Furioso*, and possibly dreamed of Lucrezia; the atmospheric old Jewish quarter can be explored around Via Mazzini; and Via Volte will lead you into the middle ages.

The city is atmospheric, beautiful in its own way, wildly historic, and, as I said, a bit eerie. It certainly deserves a visit of several days, at least – which means you'll probably need to wash your clothes. My advice is to shove your undies in a pillowcase, borrow a bicycle, and ride like a native to the laundromat. Ⓥ

Garda *of* EDEN

Jenny Oldaker pays a visit to the Veneto's lovely eastern shores of Lake Garda, where the delights of pretty Bardolino tempt her to stay a little longer in paradise…

There must be something in the air around Lake Garda. Some other-worldly matter, maybe exuding from the lake itself, that won't allow any other state but relaxation in its environs. At least this is the conclusion I reach after, travel-weary and fresh from Verona airport's hectic, heaving baggage carousel, I am treated to my first sparkling glimpse of the lake from the road, and the stresses of the journey are immediately eased by its glittering calm.

I am bound for the lakeside resort of Bardolino on the enormous lake's southeastern side. On arrival at the lush, landscaped grounds of my hotel, the modern and stylishly sprawling Hotel Caesius, just a 20-minute walk from the town's centre, my sense of peace is boosted still further as I step into the cool of its spacious reception. Reaching my room, I'm delighted to find a sideways-view of the lake from my balcony. I'm just in time for lunch and am more than ready to enjoy the plate of fresh lake trout and cold glass of Soave that are served up at the hotel's restaurant. The restaurant here offers tempting Mediterranean fare, specialising in delicious fish dishes – from both the lake and the sea. Soon happily replete, I am keen to shake off any remaining strains of the journey, and to blow away the cobwebs by getting out on the lake itself.

There is little chance of much cobweb-blowing, however – it's such a still, hot day that even out in the middle of the lake any breeze is minimal but delicious. Hotel Caesius owns a striking 1926 wooden sailing boat, the San Nicolò. It's an eye-catching, attention-grabbing vessel that can take ➤

WHERE TO STAY

HOTEL CAESIUS THERME & SPA RESORT
Via Peschiera 1
☎ +39 045 721 9100
www.hotelcaesiusterme.com
Situated just by Cisano, about 20 minutes' walk from the hub of Bardolino, this elegant, opulent hotel is the perfect place to relax and get away from it all. It has excellent spa facilities and outdoor pools plus a fantastic restaurant with a range of Italian and local specialities to enjoy. Rooms are modern, comfortable and understatedly luxurious and the whole place exudes an air of calm and tranquility.

HOTEL FIORITA
Via Solferino 49
☎ +39 045 721 0197
www.hotelfiorita.it
This three-star, family-run hotel is well located in the heart of Bardolino, on one of its typically quiet and picturesque streets. Rooms are basic, but comfortable. Private parking also available. Ask for a balcony room with a lake view.

HOTEL KRISS
Lungolargo Cipriani 3, Bardolino
☎ +39 045 621 2433
www.kriss.it
This comfortable Bardolino hotel boasts a fitness area, bike hire and private beach. Rooms are well equipped and face onto the lake, for stunning views to keep your relaxation levels high. Staff are friendly and helpful and there are 33 rooms spanning a range of price brackets.

HOTEL NETTUNO
Via Dante Alighieri 25
☎ +39 045 621 0123
www.hotel-nettuno-bardolino.it
Comfortable, plush Hotel Nettuno is a great place to make your Bardolino base during your holiday. With lakeside setting and peaceful ambiance, it is a salubrious choice for discerning holidaymakers. The smart, comfy rooms have all mod-cons and many have lakeside views with wow-factor.

MAISONME BOUTIQUE HOTEL
Lungolago Cipriani 8
☎ +39 045 621 0900
www.maisonme.it
Comfortable and contemporary MaisonMe is well situated for visitors to Bardolino in its lakeside location – just a a few minutes' walk from the town's historic centre, good local restaurants and a pebble's throw from Lido Mirabello Beach. Well-equipped rooms, good facilities and parking contribute to the appeal of this modern hotel. The excellent breakfast (included) is a splendid affair and will set you up for the day.

Hotel Caesius' 1926 sailing ketch (inset, on board) waits for passengers at the port of Cisano

DON'T MISS

FESTA DELL'UVA
Visit Bardolino in early October if you're a wine buff. It's at this time of year that the town's main wine festival takes place, featuring concerts, fireworks, local food and – of course – plenty of opportunities to taste the area's delicious Bardolino wine.

➤ up to 20 people out to see the sights of the lake exactly as they should be seen: from the water. The four-hour trip involves some great views of the lake's surrounding towns, hills and exclusive lakeside residences, as well as a little food and drink and a lot of lounging. Forget massage or yoga – this is without doubt one of the most therapeutic and relaxing experiences possible. Sitting back on deck, gazing at the water and being gently lulled into a doze, all earthly worries are a million miles away. It's an instant balm for the soul.

Beginning to nod off to the boat's serene bobbing, my drifting senses are reawoken with some force at the suggestion of a bracing swim in the lake. We 'drop anchor', and I rouse myself from my snooze to join my fellow sailors jumping into the water from the side of the boat. It is a sensational way to both wake up and cool down before heading back on deck to glide back to the tiny, chic port of Cisano, handily situated right next to Bardolino.

HITTING THE MARKET

Now I've satisfied the craving to get out onto the lake, I'm ready fill my next few days with the other treats Bardolino has to offer. And it turns out there is plenty to keep one busy. Bardolino is a small and peaceful but strikingly picturesque lakeside town, boasting a couple of pleasant beaches, two lovely churches – San Zeno and 12th-century San Severo – plus plenty of bars and restaurants and a lively market every Thursday morning. The market is well worth checking out for local products and more – and it's all located right by the lake, with some stalls so close to it they seem as if they could almost tumble in. Slip behind them if you need a breather from the shopping hordes, and you're immediately confronted with the water's edge, swaying boats and the quacks of demanding ducks requesting food.

I'm overwhelmed at the market by what seems to be several miles of stalls stretching into the distance. Each one has its own particular selection of delights, from bargain clothes to brightly-coloured

ceramics, crafts, local gastronomic treats, or nick-nacks. Get stuck in to rummage for some bargains, or simply wander along at leisure, enjoying the lively atmosphere. I choose the former and am soon laden with their spoils and gasping for refreshment and a sit down. Bar Lido at the edge of the market is perfectly located for a coffee stop – again, right by the water and with a quirky garden filled with what look like plush sofas to sit on while you gaze out at the lake. I make myself comfortable here, grab a reviving *caffè* and sit back to admire the view – and ponder how elastic my suitcase will prove when packing for my return trip.

LOCAL VINTAGE

Any visitor to Bardolino can hardly ignore its most famous and important export: delicious Bardolino wine – a light, dry red, and a rosé (Bardolino Chiaretto), which are celebrated in autumn in the town's 'Grape Festival'. It would be a near-crime to ignore Bardolino wine on your trip – and indeed you'll find it difficult to do so given its prevalence on local menus. It is, naturally, prolific in the area's restaurants and hotels, and is well worth a taste or two. And once tasted, what better way to embrace the area's favourite produce than by visiting the place it's made?

The Zeni Wine Museum and cantina is a short drive from Bardolino. Having sampled a few varieties of Bardolino on my trip already, I am keen to see the process behind its making – and even keener to get up close and personal with a few vintages at a tasting session. It's a sweltering day, as a heatwave continues to rage across the region, and on arrival at Zeni my admiration of their rolling vineyards is tempered by my discomfort in the absence of shade on this exposed hillock. All of which makes venturing down into the wine cellars themselves a particularly appealing move. The barrique cellar is atmospherically cavernous and delightfully cool, filled with ➤

DON'T MISS

LOCAL FISH
Fresh lake fish is in abundance and is *the* delicacy to taste while you're here. Make sure you try local speciality *luccio in salsa Gardesana con polenta* (pike in a Gardesana sauce with polenta).

...the whole place is enchanting, and every little wander around the buzzing town yields bright glimpses of water

A tranquil sunspot in this lakeside garden

WHERE TO EAT

BAR LIDO CISANO
Via Peschiera, Bardolino
☎ +39 331 873 3466
A prime lake-front location and relaxing beach furniture scattered around the grounds make for a chilled atmosphere at this snack bar. Sit back in style and watch the glittering water in front of you, as you knock back a coffee or slurp a *gelato* in a break from leisurely wandering.
Price range €

RISTORANTE BIRI
Via Solferino 13, Bardolino
☎ +39 045 721 0873
A friendly, pleasant venue in Bardolino. There is a good choice of food available and excellent wine list. Food is fresh, locally sourced and well presented, and you'll find a welcoming, lively atmosphere which makes this a popular choice in the town.
Price range € €

CAPRICE PIZZERIA RISORANTE
Via G. Mameli 1, Bardolino
☎ +39 045 721 0144
www.facebook.com/caprice.pizzeriaristorante
Situated in Bardolino's *centro storico* you'll find delicious pizzas here, and a wide choice from which to select at that. The setting is super-picturesque: you can sit outside in the quiet square in good weather to watch the world go by while you enjoy your meal. If you don't fancy pizza, they serve steaks and generous salads as well as vegetarian options, served fresh and good value.
Price range €

IL GIARDINO DELLE ESPERIDI
Via G. Mameli 1, Bardolino
☎ +39 045 621 0477
This is a charming and homely restaurant where the focus is on serving high quality local food and wine. Located in the centre of Bardolino's old town, it is an atmospheric locale where the meals are delicious and the wine list extensive. Meat and fish are dominant on the menu and are both well worth choosing.
Price range € €

RISTORANTE PICCOLO DOGE
Via Santa Cristina 46, Bardolino
☎ +39 045 621 2393
www.ristorantepiccolodoge.com
Choose this refined eatery for perfectly-prepared sea and lake fish, meat dishes or pasta. Situated right by the beach between Bardolino and Cisano, this is an elegant, atmospheric place to dine with lovely views of the water to enjoy while you eat.
Price range € € €

WHAT TO SEE AND DO

ZENI WINE MUSEUM
Via Costabella 9, Bardolino
☎ +39 045 721 0022
www.zeni.it
The Zeni vineyard produces a wide range of wines. Find out more about them at the museum, including a history of the vineyard and antique wine producing equipment. See how it is made today, visit the vineyards and enjoy a tasting session to decide which wine is your favourite. Check the Zeni website for up to date details of tours, tastings and prices.

OLIVE OIL MUSEUM
Via Peschiera 54, Cisano di Bardolino
☎ +39 045 622 9047
www.museum.it
This charming little museum is well worth a visit. It showcases the machinery involved in the making of one of the area's most famous products. Afterwards, there's a great shop to visit, with myriad different oils and other related products, including a range of appealing olive oil toiletries which make good-value souvenirs.

BOAT TRIPS
Available through Hotel Caesius
☎ +39 045 721 9100
Hotel Caesius' romantic-looking wooden ketch – the last operating on the lake – is the best way to sail in style. The four-hour trip on the San Nicolò sets off from Cisano, taking in the southern half of the lake, right up to lovely Isola del Garda, including time for a swim in the water.

FERRIES AROUND THE LAKE
www.navigazionelaghi.it
For another enjoyable way to get around, hop on a ferry at Bardolino harbour, which will take you to various different towns around Lake Garda, including Desenzano, Garda town and lovely Sirmione, which makes for a unique day trip.

BARDOLINO MARKET
Bustling Bardolino market sets up along the lake's shore in the town every Thursday. Open from 8am until 12.30pm you'll find all sorts to buy here, with bright stalls offering clothes, nick-nacks, local crafts and more. There is also an antique market in Bardolino held on the third Sunday of the month.

PARCO GIARDINO SIGURTÀ
www.sigurta.it
For a non-lake-based activity, this is a great trip from Bardolino. The 50-hectare park is a botanical wonderland, with pretty walks to enjoy around its woods, lakes and verdant grounds, and even a small castle housing historic artefacts.

DON'T MISS

TRIATHALON
One of Italy's biggest international triathalon events, Città di Bardolino, is held in June in the town, and it's a wonderful setting for such an event. You can find out more or register yourself to enter online, www.volkswagen.triathlon bardolino.it

➤ endless barrels of Zeni wine. It's a striking sight, and makes an impressive setting for a tasting. We work our way through a selection of the wines from the vineyard – from crisp Soave to velvety Amarone and, of course, Bardolino itself.

Our group is ably guided by Elena, one of the Zeni daughters, the latest in a long line of winemakers from this famous family. She is passionate, knowledgeable and imparts relevant, interesting information to help us along. It's a great insight into the wines of the region and makes it easy to choose a few products to take home from the shop afterwards, aware – but ignoring for the moment – the further strain this is likely to cause to my poor suitcase.

FURTHER AFIELD

Once you've sampled the delights of little Bardolino itself, the town makes a wonderful base from which to explore other tourist hotspots further afield. It is well connected by road, ferry and footpath to other places that are well worth visiting. The town of Garda is a short ferry journey or a 45-minute walk from Bardolino and is home to some lovely Renaissance palaces. Like Bardolino it is set in an idyllic lakeside location and here, verdant hills stretch into mountains behind the town. Verona is also an easy day trip from Bardolino by car and the lake's ferry system allows you to travel across the water to many other towns that line the lake.

I decide to visit famous Sirmione, formerly home of the Roman poet Catullus and latterly of opera singer Maria Callas – and many other luminaries besides. The subject of much poetry throughout the ages, this fascinating town is set on a precariously thin peninsula that stretches northwards out into the lake. The ferry makes it an easy and pleasant trip, and even waiting around for the boat is a pleasant experience – a far cry from public transport queues back home – as travellers mill around the port in the sun, enjoying views over the

...you're immediately confronted with the water's edge, swaying boats and the quacks of demanding ducks requesting food

Take a leisurely lakeside stroll at the port of Cisano

Established in the 19th century, the vineyards at Zeni are a family affair, as Elena explains (inset)

GETTING THERE

➤ BY PLANE
The best option is to fly to Verona airport (just 28km from Bardolino). Flights go from various UK airports. Other nearby airports like Bergamo, Venice and Breschia are also accessible for Bardolino, and are served by UK flights, but all are much longer journeys.

➤ BY TRAIN AND BUS
Public transport is probably not the most straightforward means of travelling to Bardolino as the town itself doesn't have a train station, but the station of Peschiera del Garda is just 10km from the town. Buses are available from Verona station to Bardolino and hotels can often arrange a shuttle service to and from Verona airport for guests. Go online to www.trenitalia.com for up-to-date train information.

➤ BY CAR
This is by far the most convenient way to get around Lake Garda and to arrive at Bardolino. From Verona airport take the A22 motorway direction Brennero as far as the exit of Affi (Lago di Garda Sud), then follow signs for Bardolino. Coming from the A4 Milan-Venice motorway, take the Peschiera del Garda exit and follow directions for Bardolino.

water and into the hills towards mighty 2218-metre Monte Baldo. The contours of these hills north of Bardolino create a fascinating shape, like a face in profile, from the vantage point of the town's port. Local guide Gabriele fills the time while we wait for the ferry by explaining a local legend behind the view. He tells me the contours are said to be the outline of sleeping Gardena. Her lover Benacus (the lake's original name) died at their wedding party and it was said that she cried so much her tears filled the lake. This romantic, tragic tale sets us on our way to Sirmione, gazing as we drift from shore, at sleeping 'Gardena', still and peaceful under the tranquil spell of Garda Lake.

SENSE OF SERENITY

Sirmione is a fitting literary inspiration, surrounded in almost every direction by sapphire glinting water and home to atmospheric architecture, including the historic Scaligero castle – one of the many built by the region's influential Scaligeri family, which is recognisable as one of the dynasty's many forts for its fishtail-shaped battlements. The whole place is enchanting, and every little wander around the buzzing town yields bright glimpses of water between each building. It feels almost like being on an island. It's possible to take a speedboat ride around the peninsula, which is a heart-racing way to get a sense of its unique geography. A ferry back to my Bardolino base later, and I'm enjoying the ongoing sense of serenity, boosted by being out on the water again, after the afternoon's exploration of Sirmione.

There's just time on my last evening to enjoy an *aperitivo* of Aperol Spritz – a local drink made from Prosecco and the spirit Aperol – and for another delicious dish caught from the depths of the lake, and then it's time for bed and an early start to head home. After several packed, but utterly relaxing days on and around the waters of über-tranquil Garda, even the thought of Verona airport, the journey ahead and lugging around my now ridiculously excessive luggage cannot temper the feeling of calm that the lake and its peaceful pace of life have instilled in me. I'm determined to hold on to the feeling as long as I can back in the real world, and can rest assured that once home, a smooth glass of Bardolino will transport me back to Garda's gently lapping shores. Ⓥ

Friuli Surprising

The region's name is a mouthful, and it's often omitted from tourist itineraries, but **Christine Smallwood** reveals ten reasons why you must visit Friuli-Venezia Giulia

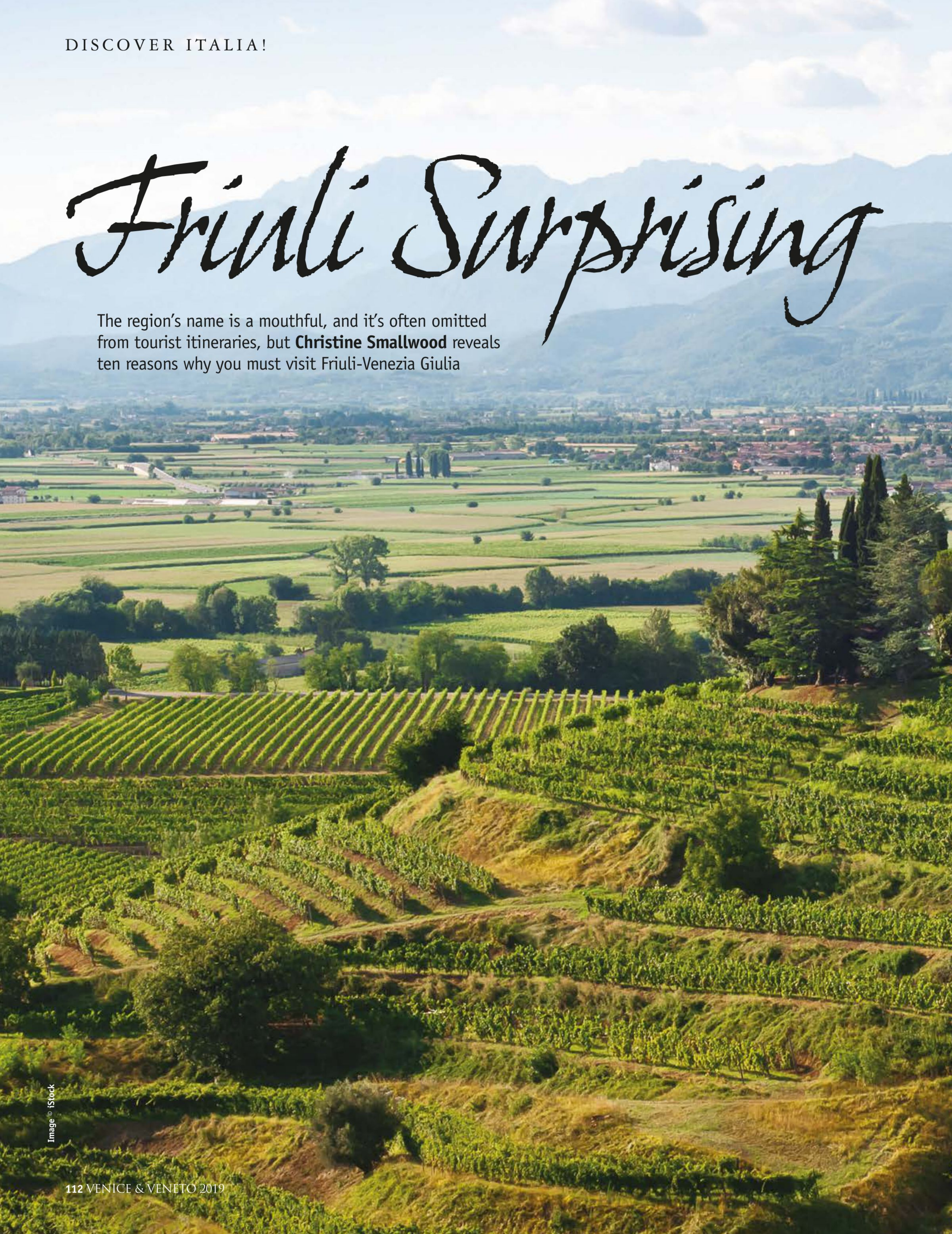


Image © iStock

Italy's most northeastern region, Friuli-Venezia Giulia is a land that has much to offer the visitor

The cities of Trieste and Udine are on the radar of some people – the former is the coffee capital of the country, and home to the headquarters of the international company Illy. But away from these urban centres, the region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia also has beautiful countryside with mountains, lakes and a unique coastline. Historians find its past fascinating, especially the town of Aquileia, which was a major settlement in Roman times and is now one of the main archaeological sites in northern Italy.

But being bordered by Austria, Slovenia and the Veneto, how could its past not be a draw? As you'd guess from the region's name, some of it was once part of the Venetian empire, and today many foreigners arrive after a visit to La Serenissima.

And one of the first things to hit new arrivals is how warm, welcoming and helpful the people are, as you'll be sure to discover should you need directions, or even more challenging assistance. Proof of the deep tradition of the *fogolâr furlan*, the warm, welcoming hearth which extends beyond the family and home.

VARIED CULINARY INFLUENCES

Unsurprisingly in a region which embraces Central European, Venetian, Germanic and Slav traditions, there are numerous and varied culinary influences. Even so, the number of excellent traditional foods is surprising – for example, *pierçolade* (peaches in wine), *fagioli rampicanti Fiorina* (Fiorina runner beans) and *stak* (a bean and potato purée). There are many interesting cheeses, including the locally popular Montasio, which is said to have been produced in the region since 1200 and takes its name from the plateau to the north of Udine. The range of vinegars, vegetables and honeys shows the extent of the bountiful food culture in this region.

And as for the wines, well, the whites from Friuli-Venezia Giulia have long been acclaimed and sought after: Friulano, Malvasia and Ribolla Gialla from the hills that stretch from Gorizia to Cividale. The red wines of Refosco, Schioppettino, Pignolo and Tazzelenghe also deserve more than a taste. If dessert wines appeal to you, then be sure to look out for Ramandolo and Picolit. And as well as nine DOC areas and three DOCG areas for wines, craft beers continue to receive ever more attention, and look out for Santòn vermouth made in Cormons.

ALPINE PASTURES

But there's more on offer than sitting at a table. If you'd rather do some gentle climbing, or make the most of mountain air, there's a choice of hiking trails up into the alpine pastures. Take a trip along the Tagliamento river that many people consider to have shaped the region's history, visit one of the 15 nature reserves, the tranquil Fusine Lakes (*our front cover image*) near Travisio or the beautiful sandy beaches of Lignano Sabbiadoro.

1 VISIT TRIESTE

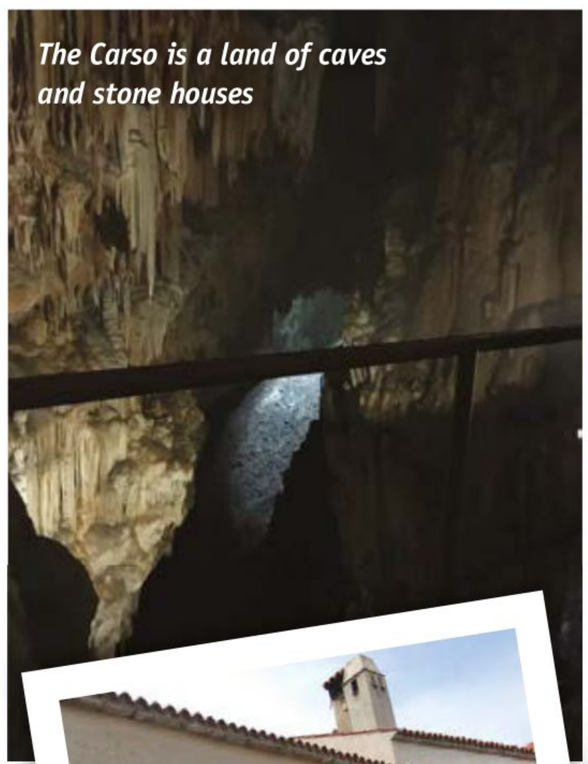
Trieste is the elegant capital of the region, yet is curiously less visited by foreigners than it deserves. It's civilised, well-mannered and boasts imposing architecture with a wealth of different styles: neoclassical, art nouveau and baroque, alongside ancient Roman remains.

The waterside Piazza Unità d'Italia showcases grand buildings on its three landbound sides, including the ornately, gold decorated Prefettura, which appears jaw-droppingly luminous when lit by the setting sun. To its side, is the Molo Audace pier. Note that this is exposed to strong crosswinds, so those who walk along it are considered brave.

The town beach is no longer a secret since the film *L'ultima spiaggia* shown in Cannes told the story of its division into female and male sides, but elsewhere in town everyone mingles together, especially in the countless charming cafés. In a region known for its coffee, Illy, the international coffee company, has its home here.

The Prefettura and, in front of it, the Caffè degli Specchi on Piazza Unità d'Italia

2 EXPLORE THE CARSO AND ITS CAVES



The Carso is a land of caves and stone houses

The Carso, or Karst, area overlooks the Adriatic Sea. It's a harsh plateau known for its rugged landscape and intriguing flora and fauna, and from Duino-Aurisina it's possible to see Italy, Slovenia and Croatia. Facts relating to everyday life reveal a lot about this corner of Europe. For instance although there's a great variety of local surnames, many were lost under Fascism because people changed them.

There are fascinating, and deep caves, some of which have had steps installed in them in order to receive visitors, but do check before making a detour to see them. Many are closed from September through to December because of resident bat colonies.

The soil here is a noticeable red colour with a heavy amount of iron and limestone. It is believed that the Carso has the highest number of small wineries in the region. Although there are many low production, family-run wineries here, most welcome visitors warmly.

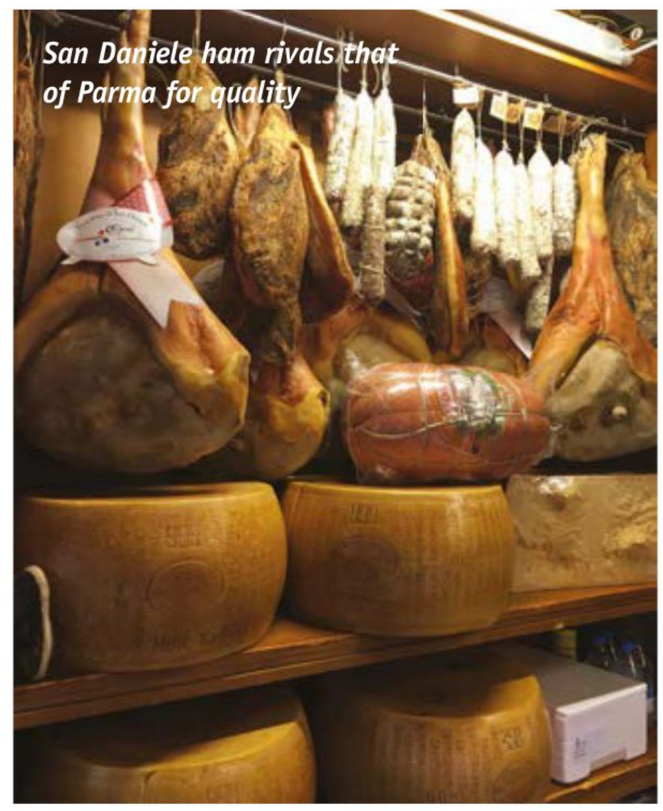
Images by Christine Smallwood unless otherwise stated

❸ ENJOY THE GASTRONOMIC SPECIALITIES

As expected in a region bordering Austria, Slovenia and Veneto, the culinary influences are varied. There's a deep love of polenta, beans and soups, along with breads, including those made with rye. Coffee, and cakes are popular – be sure to look out for *presnitz*, *putizza* and *pinza* as well as *gubana*, which was traditionally an Easter treat but is now enjoyed at other times too.

There are many local and regional surprises that may not be known worldwide but which you should make a real effort to discover, such as *jota*, the cabbage soup from Trieste. Of special note is *frico*, made with the much-loved Montasio cheese.

However, undoubtedly the best-known gastronomic product from the region is San Daniele ham. Many believe this DOP ham is better than that of Parma due to the position of and conditions in the hill town of San Daniele.


San Daniele ham rivals that of Parma for quality

❹ EAT LUNCH IN AN OSMIZA

The osmiza is a style of restaurant only found in this part of Italy

Looking for a traditional way of eating and drinking? Then search out a doorway with a *frasca*, or branch, hanging over it. This signifies an *osmiza*. The name comes from the Slovenian word *osem*, meaning 'eight', which used to be the number of days for which farmers were allowed to sell their produce without paying tax on the profits – when the branch wilted, it was a signal that the eight days were up. That period has lengthened over the years, so for example, in the *commune* of Prepotto, it is now 28 days.

Most of the items on an *osmiza* menu are served cold, be they the family's own ham, cheese or vegetable preserves. If they don't have their own vineyard, there will usually be wine from their neighbours sold alongside a selection of other local foods. It's a relaxed way to taste and discover a variety of local specialities.

❺ TREAT YOURSELF TO MICHELIN-STARRED DINING

The region does fine dining too. For example, on the outskirts of Udine is the Agli Amici restaurant, which has been awarded two Michelin stars. Run by Emanuele and Michela Scarello (chef and front of house respectively), who have welcomed the great and good of Italian fine dining to their restaurant over the years, the restaurant celebrated its 130th anniversary in 2017.

Should you not have time for the full, Michelin-starred spread, there is also a more casual place to one side of the main restaurant, the Gnocchi Kitchen Bar. Stylish and with the same rigorous sourcing of ingredients, it's more relaxed and informal than the Agli Amici. Emanuele believes that "food is our way of communicating; every dish tells a story of its *territorio*."

Start your meal with a local vermouth, served here with a small spoon of lemon juice ("it adds a delicious freshness," explains Michela) and it will all start to fall into place.

The Gnocchi Kitchen Bar

Emanuele and Michela

WHERE TO STAY

HOTEL CONTINENTALE
Via San Nicolò, 25 – Trieste
☎ +39 040 631717
www.continentalehotel.com
On a pedestrianised street in the centre of town, five minutes from the waterfront. Near to lots of shops, bars and many of the main attractions. Staff are attentive and breakfast is efficiently served in an adjacent café.

SAVOIA EXCELSIOR PALACE
Riva del Mandracchio, 4 – Trieste
☎ +39 040 77941
www.starhotelscollezione.com
Luxury accommodation with enviable views over the water. The hotel restaurant is a collaboration with Eataly and the bar has an interesting selection of wines from Collio. There's also a fitness centre if you want to work off the calories.

GRAND HOTEL DUCHI D'AOSTA
Piazza Unità d'Italia, 2 – Trieste
☎ +39 040 760 0011
http://duchi.eu
High-end comfort on the stunning waterfront Piazza Unità d'Italia in the heart of the city. There's a lovely little bar here which often holds live piano music concerts on Saturday evenings.

HOTEL ASTORIA
Piazza XX Settembre, 24 – Udine
☎ +39 0432 505091
www.hotelastoria.udine.it
Situated on the Piazza XX Settembre, which holds a small but appealing market, the hotel is rather dated but in a good central position. Staff are helpful and happy to take time to share information on the town, its events and independent shops. Room rate includes breakfast.

❻ TAKE A BOAT RIDE OUT ONTO THE MARANO LAGOON

For a day out with a difference, take a leisure boat from Marano Lagunare and speed across the waters of the Marano Lagoon, perhaps stopping to look at the ducks, wave at the fishermen and admire the traditional houses, *casoni*, to which strict rules apply: their roofs have to be covered in reeds, and only certain people can purchase them.

Some fishermen offer simple, rustic lunches, at which you can enjoy stories and a delicious local fish pasta dish around a traditional hearth. On returning to harbour you may be able to steal a glimpse of the auction of fish from the lagoon and the Adriatic. It's an animated scene and moves quickly as it's a Dutch auction.

❼ WANDER AROUND UDINE

The prosperous city of Udine is the capital of Friuli. Its 100,000 inhabitants tend to be politically central and proudly "catholic in both senses". Their city is easy to walk or cycle around, and is home to an abundance of architectural gems.

Parts of the city's *duomo* date from 1230 and it houses several Renaissance paintings, among them works by Tiepolo and altars similar to those in St Peter's, Rome. The two Moors ringing the bell in the Piazza della Libertà recall Piazza San Marco in neighbouring Venice.

Back in the Middle Ages, this was the piazza where the authorities communicated with the population, where justice was served, and where people were executed. The gate to the nearby castle was designed by Andrea Palladio.

It's not all serious: at the end of the day head to Piazza delle Erbe to join workers in the early evening relaxing with friends in the bars here.

Udine is perfect for strolling

❽ ENJOY AN APERITIVO

Aperitivo hour sees the start of after-work socialising. For example, in Udine's Osteria Pierimortadele, with its smile-inducing logo of a pig's tail forming a corkscrew, the locals call in for "*un taj di chel bon*" – a good glass of wine in company. There's a wide choice of wines by the glass so it's easy to try the regional grapes and blends. Perhaps a Friuliano or a Ribolla Gialla. With the renowned wine producing areas of Collio and Collio Orientali nearby, there's an intriguing local selection.

It's never just about the drinking for an *aperitivo* in Italy, and here there's a choice of expertly carved cooked ham on a slice of bread with horseradish, which is a popular addition here, mortadella, or a choice of cheese.

The locals are friendly and will happily suggest other places to go for a different drinking experience. It's a great way to start the evening in style.

Cooked ham with horseradish is a speciality in Udine

❾ DISCOVER THE WINES OF COLLIO

The white wines of Friuli-Venezia Giulia are highly regarded, and the area of Collio, in the Province of Gorizia, has conditions that are particularly favourable for vine cultivation. The vineyards here, covering around 1,500 hectares, are mainly found on gentle slopes, usually between 100 and 350 metres above sea level and can rely on a gentle, temperate climate.

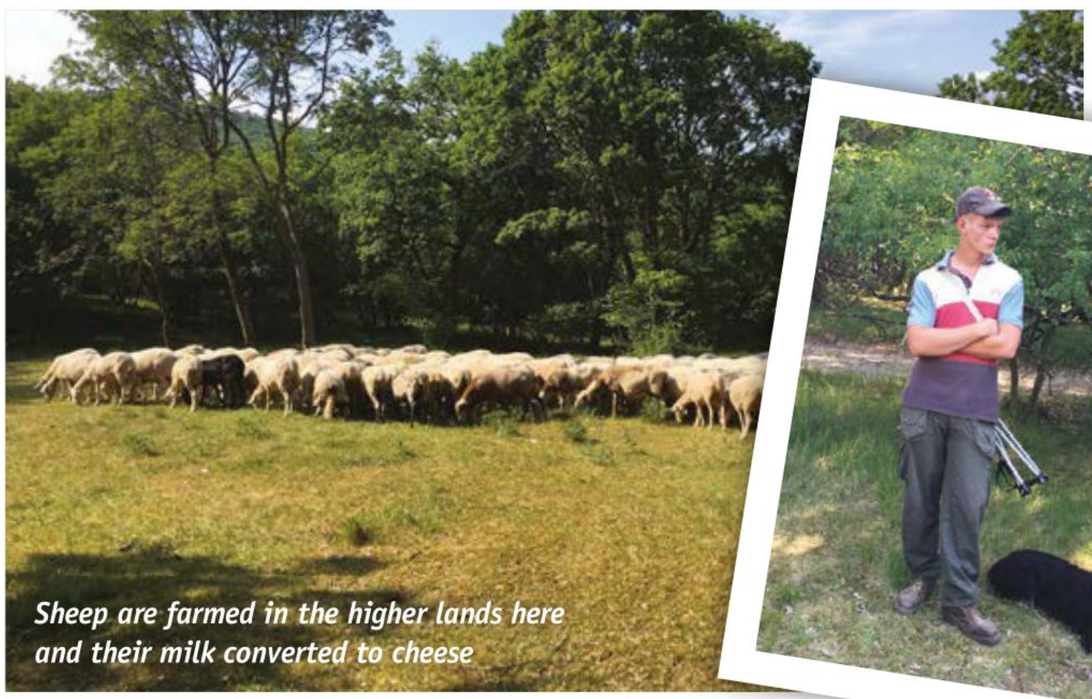
Known for its subsoil, the famous *ponca* (in Friulian dialect), which crumbles easily, the land also benefits from a rare sedimentary deposit known as *flysch* which is particularly rich in minerals. One winery of note here is the Fondazione Villa Russiz, which dates from 1868 and has vines on 45 hectares. It is famous not only because of its fascinating family and winery history, but also because the Foundation invests in and manages a small home for orphans and children who need care. Enjoy their wide range of wines, knowing that you're helping a worthwhile cause.

The Collio wine region is famed for its subsoil

❿ SPEND TIME WITH A SHEPHERD

Local cheeses are popular in Friuli-Venezia Giulia. To find out more about these, opt for the joyful experience of spending a few hours with a shepherd and his sheep.

The Antonic di Andrea Štoka farm in Duino-Aurisina will let you spend time with its flock and a friendly, but hard-working sheep dog. The farm is heavily involved in educating children and welcomes visits from many school groups. There is a focus on supporting local breeds of sheep, specifically the *pecora carsolina*, also known as *pecora istriana*, and continuing the tradition of Carso shepherds, which has been in rapid decline over the past century. There's a holistic benefit to this – for instance, the sheep reduce the risk of forest fires because their grass consumption keeps the vegetation low.


Sheep are farmed in the higher lands here and their milk converted to cheese

At the end of the day, back at the farmhouse, you can taste the fruits of their labours by trying some of their pecorino cheeses and the local honey. Ⓥ

EAT REGIONAL SPECIALITIES

CAFFÈ DEGLI SPECCHI
Piazza dell'Unità d'Italia, 7 – Trieste
☎ +39 040 661973
This high-profile café is particularly well-positioned, but if you are sitting on the terrace, watch out for audacious pigeons who may consider your food to be theirs.

SHEEP FARM – AZIENDA AGRICOLA ANTONIC DI ANDREA ŠTOKA
Ceroglie, 44 – Duino Aurisina, Trieste
info@asinoberto.it
www.asinoberto.it
Offers customised visits with the shepherds and their flocks followed by a cheese and honey tasting. Visits must be booked in advance for 8-12 people at €35 per person.

OSTERIA PIERIMORTADELE
Via Bartolini, 8 – Udine
☎ +39 0432 509234
www.pierimortadele.com
A popular place for a drink. Buzzing at aperitivo time with a good-natured crowd.

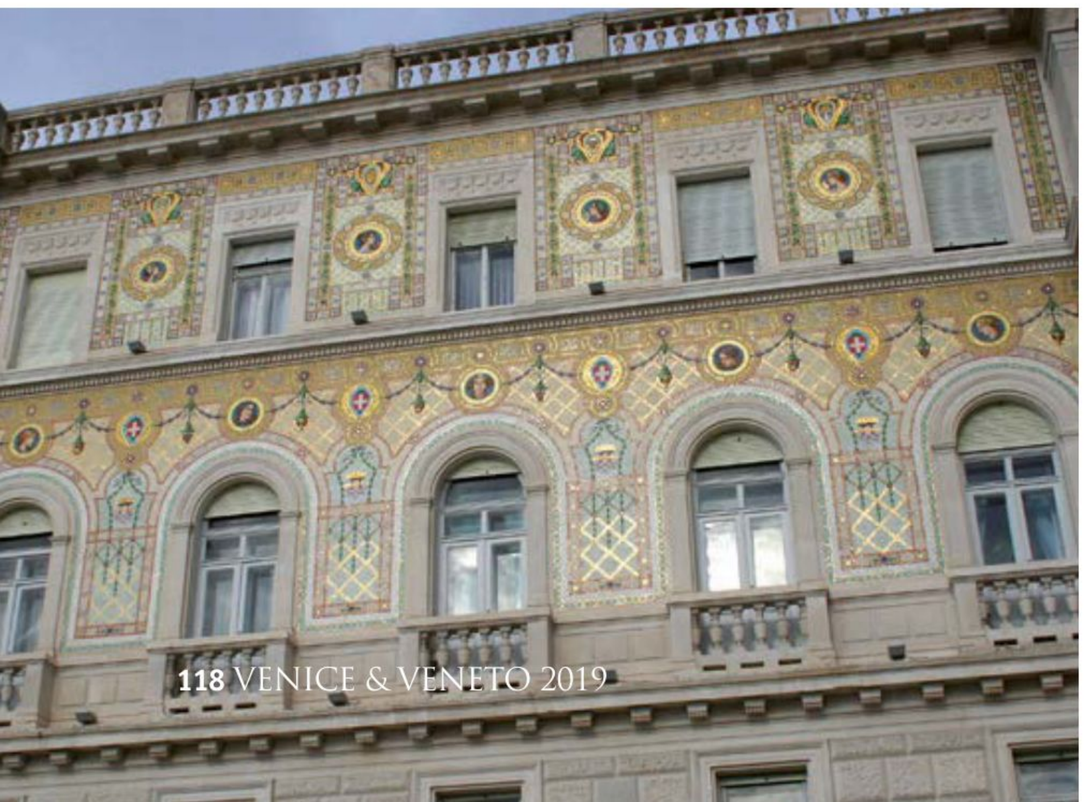
AGLI AMICI
Via Liguria, 252 – Udine
☎ +39 0432 565411
www.agliamici.it
Set up in 1887, Agli Amici is the only restaurant with two Michelin stars in the region (it was awarded its second in 2013). There's an emphasis on produce from Friuli and a particularly interesting cheese board.

PECCOL WINE SHOP
Via Caterina Percoto, 2/c – Udine
☎ +39 0432 200252
www.peccolvini.com
Charming, traditional wine shop with an intriguing range of wines, spirits and vermouths. The place to go if you're after something specific or interested in an overview of local wines.

BATTELLO SANTA MARIA BOAT TRIPS
Marano Lagoon
☎ +39 339 633 0288
www.battellosantamaria.it
Nico Pavan runs a variety of boat excursions from Marano Lagunare on the Marano Lagoon. For groups, he can organise a trip to one of the traditional *casoni* for lunch, perhaps cooked by his parents.

GETTING THERE

➤ BY PLANE
Ryanair flies direct from Stansted to Trieste. Or fly to Venice, from where it takes less than an hour and a half by road to Udine. Easyjet (from Stansted) and Wizz (from Luton) fly direct to Ljubljana, from where it is about an hour and a quarter by road to Udine, or just under two hours to Trieste.



Clockwise, from top left: A passeggiata *by the water; classic statues abound; a city view from the citadel; cats rule; a figure in a theatre alcove; the fountain in Piazza Vittorio Veneto; a stunning* palazzo *on Piazza Unità; colourful after-dinner ice creams; Caffè degli Specchi on Piazza Unità*

48 HOURS IN...

Trieste

Civilised Trieste is a unique spot where three different European cultures converge. **Fleur Kinson** falls for this elegant, comfortable city of open minds and wide horizons

Over morning coffee in a 200-year-old café on one of the largest piazzas in Italy, I'm pondering the idea of nationality. What is it? Just an abstract fiction? Trieste makes you contemplate things like this. It makes you think about all manner of things. This is not a city that makes an urgent appeal to the senses, but one that continually stimulates the intellect. In Trieste, surrounded by order and kindness, comfort and civility, your unruffled mind is free to think.

Nationality, then. If anywhere gives this notion the lie, it's Trieste. The city sits out on a strange little coastal limb, the very end of northeast Italy. Slovenia lies just five miles away, Croatia ten. For 600 years Trieste was part of the mighty Austro-Hungarian empire, ultimately serving as its chief seaport. It's been back in Italian hands since 1919, but as late as 1999 a national poll revealed that 70 per cent of Italians didn't know the city was in Italy. You can't really blame them. Trieste is one of Italy's 'least Italian' cities, showing none of the country's passionate or flamboyant stereotypes.

But if it's not really Italian, it's not really anything else either. Or rather, it's everything. Trieste has long been a unique meeting point of the three chief strands of European civilisation – Latinate, Teutonic and Slavic. Each of those colourful threads is still here, distinct yet intertwined. You can fancifully think of the city as a sort of first EU. It still shows in its culture, appearance and people an unrivalled union of Europeans and Europeanness. Arguably, it distills Europe to an essence. Trieste has been in its time a world city too – trading ➤

Photos by Fleur Kinson

WHERE TO STAY

STARHOTEL SAVOIA EXCELSIOR PALACE 1
Riva del Mandracchio 4
☎ +39 040 77941
www.starhotels.com/trieste-hotel
This elegant seafront hotel was built during Trieste's Austro-Hungarian heyday, and its plush, restful interior retains a distinctly Mitteleuropean atmosphere. The spacious rooms, in serene, muted colours, are well soundproofed. Enjoy the old-fashioned library, with theatrical lighting, which forms part of the lobby.
Double room from €150

NUOVO ALBERGO CENTRO 2
Via Roma 13
☎ +39 040 347 8790
www.hotelcentrotrieste.it
Newly refurbished, this family-run hotel is extremely good value. The location is very central, just one street away from the Canale Grande and a short walk from the train station. Rooms are comfortable and airy. Pets are welcome and bicycles can be hired at reception for just €10.
Double room from €45

RESIDENCE SAN GIUSTO 3
Via Montecchi 8
☎ +39 040 763826
www.residencesangiusto.it
Not far from the castle and cathedral, this excellent-value residence comprises 21 self-catering apartments variously sized for three, four or five people. Rooms are comfortable, with a smart, clean décor of bold-coloured furnishing against white walls. The place is child-friendly, has private parking and wi-fi throughout.
Apartments €425-€850 per week

HOTEL CONTINENTALE 4
Via San Nicolò 25
☎ +39 040 631717
www.continentalehotel.com
Nicely situated in the heart of Trieste, this century-old hotel overlooks a pedestrianised street full of shops, cafés and restaurants. All the city's sights are within easy walking distance. Rooms are clean and comfortable, with classy traditional furnishings.
Double room from €140

HOTEL MIRAMARE 5
Viale Miramare 325/1-327/1
☎ +39 040 224 7085
www.hotelmiramaretrieste.it
This sleek, modern 4-star hotel full of stylish contemporary design lies within walking distance of Miramare Castle. Its serene, luxurious rooms gaze out onto the Gulf of Trieste and are bathed in sea light. Full range of facilities and services. Five minutes' drive from the city.
Double room from €140

Fireworks light up the waterside

A post boy blows a horn from the façade of the grand post office

Ginger gets taken for a stroll – the eccentric Triestini love their animals!

DON'T MISS

RIDE TO OPICINA
Scenic and romantic, this journey up into the high Carso behind Trieste is unmissable. Part tramway, part funicular, the line was opened in 1902 and has been much-loved ever since. Ride through city streets and countryside to the village of Opicina, with tremendous views of Trieste and its bay. Departs Piazza Oberdan every 20 minutes.

➤ across the globe, welcoming exiles, and acting as a powerful engine for cosmopolitanism. It might be a humbler place than that now, but it's a no less contented one.

I drain my espresso cup and leave Piazza Unità. With only 48 hours to see Trieste, I can't sit here all day thinking! Thankfully, Trieste boasts few compelling boxes for the sightseer to tick, and it's possible to get a flavour of the place in two days. This is not so much a city of sights as a city of atmosphere. And that atmosphere is one of high civilisation, of contented society and jovial calm. In truth, Trieste is an enchanting place simply to be. In whichever corner of the city you find yourself, Trieste's greatest attractions – its restful orderliness, its open-minded decency – are always there.

ROOM FOR ALL

A few streets inland I find the 'old city' – a little hill with an ancient Roman theatre at its foot, a cathedral halfway up and a sprawling castle on top. The Illyrians, a hazy ancient people, built a walled village on this hill, which grew into Trieste. Romans were the first to take over, before Venetians, then Habsburgs and then Italians. The Roman theatre is now a grassy heap of stones, and smart townhouses perched high above it gaze straight over the top of it and out to sea – as if ignoring the ruins and their irrelevance to Trieste. The truth is that an empire other than Rome's ultimately shaped this city. Namely the Austro-Hungarian, whose players hugely expanded Trieste in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Outside the cathedral, just before I slip inside, I see an otherwise sane and respectable-looking man taking his ginger cat for a stroll. Balanced on his shoulders. The cat, obviously an accustomed traveller, moves in skilful counterbalance to the man's motion, calmly treading round his shoulders and upper back like a sailor swinging in the rigging as his ship moves through rolling waters. The man stops to chat to a friend, the cat stands still. The man moves on again, and the cat resumes his subtle ballet. This tiny incident seems to confirm two things I've heard about the

A war memorial on the seafront – one of many in the city

Triestini – that they adore animals, and they welcome eccentrics.

The interior of the cathedral is decorated in a subdued, rather modest fashion. Fitting for a city that's never been one for passionate religiosity. There are churches of every conceivable faith in Trieste (later I will pass a gigantic Serbian Orthodox temple, a stout synagogue, a Jesuit church, a Benedictine monastery, churches Anglican, Waldensian, Lutheran, Mechitarist...). But they are signs of the city's inclusivity, rather than any special predisposition toward belief. Trieste is fundamentally secular, and profoundly tolerant. Even the small notice I see at the cathedral's Eucharist altar politely acknowledges atheists as well as believers: "*Chi ha fede, adori; chi non ha questo dono passi con rispetto*," it requests. "Those who have faith, worship; those who do not have this gift, pass respectfully."

Outside, I stroll past Roman columns and climb to the hilltop citadel, where high, outdoor walkways give expansive views. It's a day of mixed weather, the sky brilliantly blue over the coast but blackly brooding inland. Thus I gaze across brightly-lit townhouses rising toward a brutal, dark chunk of unilluminated greenery that looms over the back of Trieste. It's the Karst, or Carso, the geologically-awkward chunk of limestone that sits behind the city and, rather ironically, blocks it off from the rest of the world – in effect emphasising Trieste's maritime significance.

Wild, elemental forces seem to surround this calm and orderly city. The forbidding Karst, the notorious bora wind that periodically howls in from the northeast and, of course, the unending sea – linking Trieste to the rest of the world.

Trieste's attractions – its restful orderliness, its open-minded decency – are always there

DON'T MISS

BARCOLANA REGATTA
Filling the bay of Trieste with two thousand jaunty white sails, this annual yacht race is one of the world's largest, and makes a wonderful spectacle. The whole city goes boat-mad for a few days, and there's a tremendous atmosphere down by the waterside. The race takes place every second Sunday in October.

WHERE TO EAT & DRINK

CHIMERA DI BACCO 6
Via del Pane 2
☎ +39 040 2475393
www.chimeradibacco.com
Tucked into a charming alley in the centre of town, this excellent little restaurant serves innovative Italian dishes – intensely flavoursome and beautifully presented. Try the seven-course taster menu, with wines. The décor is elegant yet unfussy, and there are outdoor tables in summer.
Price range € €

CAFFÈ SAN MARCO 7
Via Cesare Battisti 18
☎ +39 040 064 1724
Opened in 1914, this café's late-Art-Nouveau interior is very well preserved – with frescoes, mirrors, painted wall medallions, marble tables and lintels patterned with coffee leaves. Writers and intellectuals, including James Joyce, loved to hang out here, and the atmosphere is still relaxed.
Price range €

ARCORICCARDO RISTORANTE 8
Via del Trionfo 3
☎ +39 040 241 0446
www.arcoriccardo-ristorante.it
How can you fail to love a restaurant that has a 2,000-year-old Roman arch climbing through its outer wall? Tucked just behind the grand Piazza Unità, this stylish place serves great local dishes – especially fish and seafood. The décor is restful and modern.
Price range € €

TRATTORIA AI FIORI 9
Piazza Hortis 7
☎ +39 040 300633
www.aifiori.com
On a leafy square between the seafront and the castle, this classy restaurant serves excellent seafood and fish dishes. Inspiration comes from traditional Trieste fare and dishes typical of the Istrian peninsula just across the border in Croatia. Fish and vegetables are super-fresh and artfully presented.
Price range € €

CAFFÈ DEGLI SPECCHI 10
Piazza dell'Unità d'Italia 7
☎ +39 040 368033
www.caffespecchi.it
The plush interior is blandly elegant, but indoors is not what this historic café is about. Enjoying a prime site on the wonderful Piazza Unità, with ample outdoor tables, there's nowhere better to linger over coffee. And prices are no higher than in a humble café.
Price range €

WHAT TO SEE AND DO

PIAZZA UNITÀ 11

Properly 'Piazza dell'Unità d'Italia', this huge, central square is the heart of Trieste and is mentioned so often and with such affection that its name has inevitably shrunk. Lined on three sides with grand Austro-Hungarian buildings and opening straight onto the sea, it's a magnificent place to stroll or to relax and people-watch over coffee.

THE OLD CITY 12

On a little hill behind Piazza Unità, you can find Roman ruins, winding medieval lanes, the city's cathedral, a park, and a hilltop castle offering great views. This hill is where Trieste started life, as an Illyrian settlement, which later became a Roman town. Everything beyond the hill began with 18th-century Austro-Hungarian expansion.

HISTORIC CAFÉS 13

Coffee has always been a big deal in Trieste. The city was a prime entry-point for coffee import into Europe, and café culture here goes back a long way. Several 'historic cafés persist from the Austro-Hungarian heyday, and are very atmospheric places to savour the little black cup. Try the Caffè degli Specchi, Tommaseo, Tergesteo, San Marco, Stella Polare, and many more…

SEAFRONT AND MARINA 14

The sea made Trieste what it was – a world-class seaport at the centre of a once-mighty empire. And the sea is still deep in the city's soul. Be sure to join the happy evening *passeggiata* along the city's elegant waterside, and take time to admire the tidy boats and their dense forest of masts in the city's neat marina.

BARCOLA SEASIDE 15

As you head out of the city towards Miramare Castle, a succession of pebble beaches and waterside decking provide attractive places to sunbathe. In warm weather the Triestini flock here to peacefully soak up the rays together. In certain places they are watched by colonies of rare and adorable black cormorants, who roost on nearby rocks.

MIRAMARE CASTLE 16

On a little promontory about five miles from the city centre, the haunting white folly of Miramare Castle is Trieste's number one tourist attraction. Built in the mid-19th century as a love-nest for the ill-fated Austrian Archduke Maximilian and his bride, the castle is full of wonderful period furnishings and colourful stories. Extensive gardens of tropical flora add to its romance, with 54 acres of grounds including a clifftop and seashore park.

© Netmaps UK www.digitalmaps.co.uk

DON'T MISS

***JOTA* OR ISTRIAN STEW**
Typical of Trieste, of Croatia's Istrian peninsula and of the Slovenian Littoral region, this rich and filling soup is delicious 'comfort food'. Depending on the cook, it can include all or most of the following: beans, barley, sauerkraut, potatoes, bacon, spare ribs, smoked pork, garlic, onion, parsley and seasoning.

➤ I descend the hill and wander Trieste's elegant streets. Suited men stand chatting outside a grand theatre. Fountains plash. Twenty-somethings stroll with an affable air past plate-glass-fronted boutiques. Near the hyperbolically-named Canale Grande (actually a tiny harbour for little boats in the heart of town), I come across a wonderful statue of James Joyce, rightfully positioned striding along the pavement of the city he loved rather than poised on a plinth above the level of the street.

Famously, Joyce wrote or prepared most of his greatest works while living in Trieste. You assume the statue is a fellow pedestrian until you get close enough to realize he's made of bronze. And then you suddenly grasp that Joyce really is a fellow pedestrian. He's still here among the city-strollers, and he'll be here forever. At the statue's foot, a little plaque gives his dates and quotes in Italian (a line from a letter to his wife): "*La mia anima è a Trieste.*" My soul is in Trieste.

Further on, in the Piazza Vittorio Veneto, I'm stopped dead in my tracks by the most beautiful fountain I've ever seen. Massive sea-gods and a doughty mermaid uphold a giant scalloped shell from which water tumbles, dripping down their bowed heads. It's not giddy Baroque frippery, but moving fin-de-siècle drama. Touchingly, while occupied with their tremendous burden, one of the sea-gods and the mermaid brush hands in a gesture of private reassurance. The longer I look at the fountain, the more it seems to me to suggest the noble weight of civilisation – upheld only by joint effort and mutual respect. A fitting theme for this powerfully decent and cooperative city.

There's no stereotypically Italian driving, no high-spirited impatience or bravado

Trieste, I realise as I continue to wander, is chock-full of stunning statuary, caryatids and the like. At the grand post office, I admire an adorable pair of post boys standing on the frontage – larger-than-life children in postal uniform, one smiling at an envelope, the other

The magnificent municipal building lit up by night in Piazza Unità

The huge Piazza Unità is at the heart of Trieste, with one side overlooking the sea

Visit the citadel with its fabulous views of the city and plentiful statues

gamely blowing a post horn. Everywhere across the city, there are finely-wrought figures striding through fountains or posing in wall-niches, huge-breasted women flanking doorways, characterful faces gazing out from pediments and lintels. In Trieste, you are never alone.

A PLACE TO RELAX

And you are never harried. This is a most stress-free of cities – remarkably unblighted by any of the usual urban chaos, din or ugliness. In all my perambulations, I feel particularly relaxed crossing the road. There's no stereotypically Italian driving here, no high-spirited impatience or unnerving bravado. Cars wait politely at traffic lights, stop immediately at pedestrian crossings, drive with all due care and at modest speed. Trieste's roads are a world away from Naples! Stereotypical Italian friendliness is here in abundance, meanwhile. When I get hopelessly lost, a series of kind strangers pleasantly re-direct me, each seeming to relish the tiny opportunity to help.

A pair of 14-year-olds provide the acid test. I guiltily interrupt their furtive snogging to beg directions, and they delight in assisting me. Olive-skinned, with high cheekbones and blue eyes, they have all the ethnically-mixed beauty you'd expect of this place. In perfect English, they guide me onward. I ask them "Is Trieste a good place to live?" and they enthusiastically answer "Yes!" I ask why, and their answer is simple and immediate: "The sea."

Taking my cue from them, I conclude the day with a blissful wander along the lovely seafront promenade. Much later I will join the strollers around bubbling, convivial late-night Trieste. Tomorrow, of course, I will spend enjoying Miramare, the enchanting white castle five miles outside the city. Miramare is Trieste's number one tourist attraction, and an unmissably fascinating place indeed. But for me, nothing will quite surpass the gentle, civilised delights of the city itself. Ah yes, Mr Joyce, I feel it too. My soul is in Trieste. Ⓥ

DON'T MISS

LA GROTTA GIGANTE
Full of huge stalagmites and stalactites, the world's largest visitable cave lies deep in the Carso behind Trieste. There are 500 steps to negotiate, but pauses for delighted astonishment keep you going. Catch the No 42 bus from Trieste bus station. Note that the subterranean atmosphere isn't great for asthma sufferers.

GETTING THERE

➤ BY PLANE
The closest airport (33km from the city centre) is the Friuli-Venezia Giulia airport, in Ronchi dei Legionari. Buses (51) to the city run every 30 minutes and take about 55 minutes.

➤ BY TRAIN
Trieste Central Station can be reached with Eurostar and Intercity trains from most major Italian cities.

➤ BY CAR
Coming from Venice direction, get off the A4 at the exit for the SS14 for the beautiful Costiera road. Coming from Slovenia, head for the SS15 at the Rabuiese border or the SS58 at the Fernetti border.

➤ KEY TO RESTAURANT PRICES
(full meal per person, not including wine)
€ Up to €25
€ € €26-€50
€ € € More than €50

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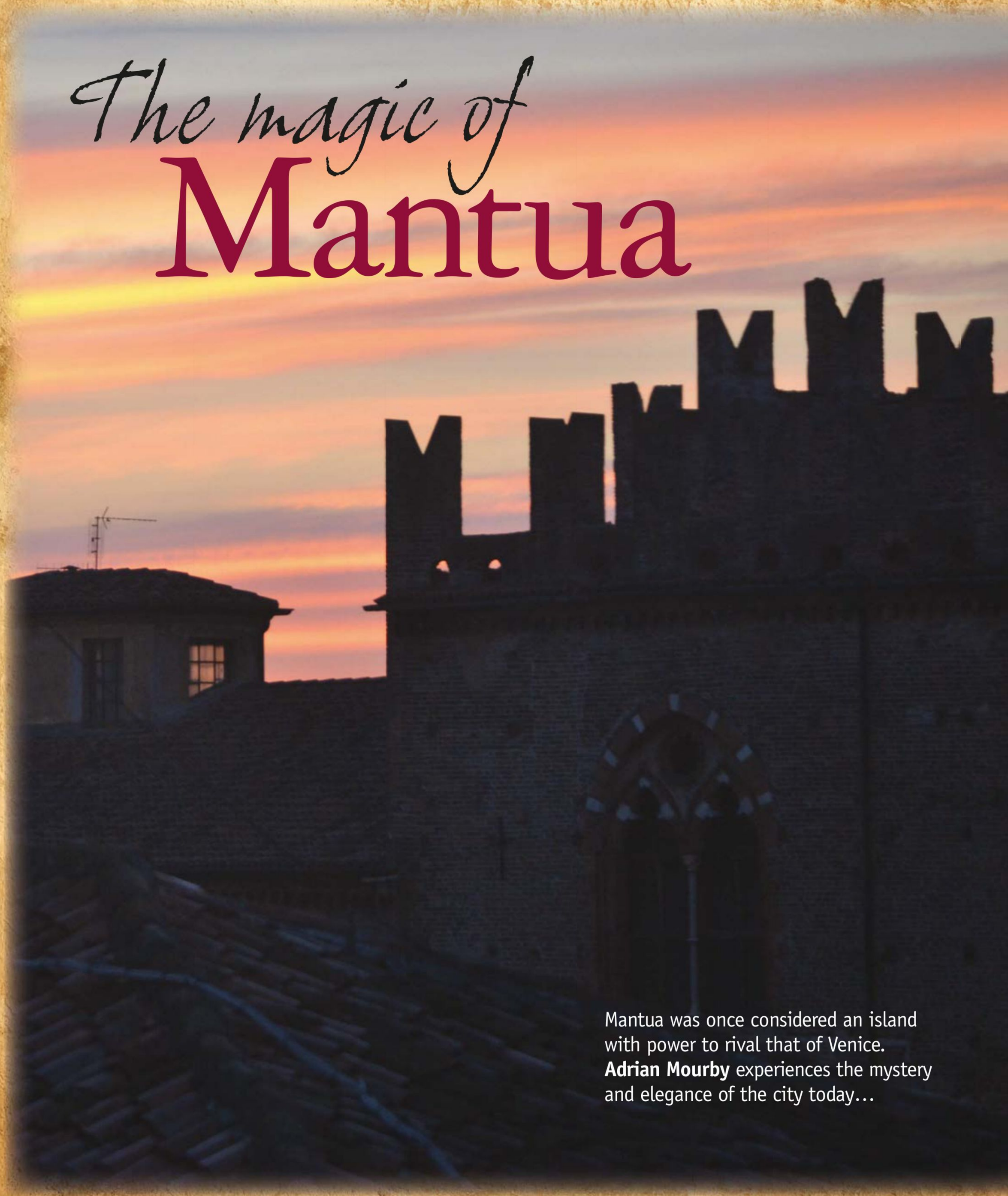
The magic of Mantua



Mantua was once considered an island with power to rival that of Venice. **Adrian Mourby** experiences the mystery and elegance of the city today…

Photography by Adrian Mourby

Clockwise from right: The statue of Rigoletto; the author on his hotel roof; a busker entertains passers-by; the nave of the Cathedral of San Pietro

Through the early morning mist, as my boat crossed the still waters of Lago Inferiore, Mantua's towers and domes rose like a fairytale kingdom.

In the days when the Gonzaga family controlled Mantua, four artificial lakes surrounded the fortified city, cutting it off from Lombardy. The fourth of these, Lago Pajolo, was drained in the 18th century so that Mantua might expand south. Only Rio, a narrow canal that once bisected the city, remains to remind us of the days when mighty Mantua was an Italian island almost as powerful as Venice.

I had arranged for the boatman to drop me in Porto Catena, at the eastern edge of Rio, so I could see the city before it awoke. Maybe I'd catch the ghosts of Monteverdi and Mantegna, Giulio Romano and all the other great artists whom the Gonzaga family enticed to Mantua in its heyday.

Entering the city by Piazza Arche, I walked up cobbled streets as far as Piazza Sordello. This long, cobbled rectangle waits patiently outside the Ducal Palace. Around it stand the Cathedral, Palazzo Castiglioni, where I'd be staying, and a small clutter of restaurants whose chairs had not yet been set out for the morning. There's also a number of tall brick towers, an entrance to the Ducal Palace, and the House of Rigoletto, which is probably the strangest place to start any tour of a city.

Rigoletto, as everyone knows, is the most famous person not to have lived in Mantua. He was actually called Triboulet and was the deformed court jester to kings Louis XII and Francis I of France. In 1851 the censors of La Fenice Opera made Giuseppe Verdi move his story of royal misdeeds from Paris to Mantua. The resultant opera, *Rigoletto*, was such a success that in 1978 a house in Piazza Sordello was nominated Casa Rigoletto and a life-size statue of the hunchbacked jester was placed in its front garden.

Walking south up the gently inclined piazza I came to the Cathedral of San Pietro, which is a curious confection with gothic brick arches, a white marble façade in the neo-classical style and a romanesque campanile. I slipped in through one of the side doors to find a ➤

In the days when the Gonzaga family controlled Mantua, four artificial lakes surrounded the fortified city, cutting it off from Lombardy

WHERE TO STAY AND EAT

➤ PALAZZO CASTIGLIONE
Piazza Sordello, 12
☎ +39 338 1824408
www.palazzocastiglionimantova.com
Unbeatable for style and central location. Imaginately decorated luxury suites.

➤ CASA POLI
Corso Garibaldi, 32
☎ +39 0376 288170,
www.hotelcasapoli.it
27 rooms in this design-conscious four-star hotel, with bookable off-road parking.

➤ HOTEL BROLETTO
Via Accademia, 1
☎ +39 0376 326784
www.hotelbroletto.com
Centrally-placed between Piazza Sordello and Pizza Erbe, you can get round the city on foot.

➤ RISTORANTE IL CIGNO DEI MARTINI
Piazza Carlo D'Arco, 1
☎ +39 0376 327101
www.ristoranteilcignomantova.com
Old-school gentlemanly service and many chef specialities in this fine dining locale.

➤ ANTICA OSTERIA AI RANARI
Via Trieste, 11
☎ +39 0376 328431
www.ranari.it
Good local food, popular with locals.

➤ GRIFONE BIANCO
Piazza Erbe, 6-7
☎ +39 0376 362798
www.grifonebianco.com
The best of the tourist restaurants in Piazza Erbe, with a great location.

surprisingly gracious and harmonious nave, given the hodge-podge of styles outside. Built by the great Giulio Romano in 1545 after a fire, the nave has an understated beauty that's illuminated by gold, white and mushroom paintwork. Evidently, Romano based his designs of what St Peter's in Rome looked like before its current, baroque incarnation.

And then something strange and wonderful happened. The organ started up with a tune that was only vaguely familiar until I recognised *Gabriel's Oboe* from Ennio Morricone's score to *The Mission*. The organist had come in early to practise for a wedding. And I was one of only two or three people there to witness this moment of unexpected beauty.

Still transported, I walked on past Palazzo Bianchi, the Bishop's Palace since 1823, and dropped my bag with the porter at Palazzo Castiglioni, which is owned by descendants of Baldassare Castiglione, the Renaissance writer and friend of Raphael who worked as an ambassador for Gonzagas. The family lets out rooms in their tower to visitors, though apparently mine wasn't ready yet.

Up ahead, in Piazza delle Erbe, the cafe proprietors were putting out chairs in the square that is renowned as Mantua's tourist trap, so I diverted to the right in front of Antica Osteria Broletto and came upon a side view of the mighty Basilica of San Andrea. This is a colossal building whose dome dominates the skyline of Mantua. It's almost too big for the city. The basilica was begun in 1474 and by the time it was completed, some three hundred years later, it had six side chapels, each with a footprint the size of a small church. It also had a massive marble octagon beneath its dome indicating where the relic of Christ's blood is buried.

According to legend, Longinus, the centurion who stood at the foot of the Cross, subsequently travelled to Mantua (for reasons unknown) and in 1304 his body, along with a handful of earth that had been soaked with Christ's blood, was found buried here. These relics are now kept in the crypt behind twelve locked doors. Each Good Friday evening the four doorkeepers, who each possesses three of the keys, unlock the crypt so that the blood of our Lord can be displayed to the faithful.

I diverted to the right and came upon the mighty Basilica of San Andrea, a colossal building whose dome dominates the skyline

Mantua, like so many Italian cities times, was once festooned with towers. I passed the tallest as I walked from Piazza Sordello towards Piazza delle Erbe. The Tower of the Cage looms over the Palace of the Podesta from where Mantua was run in medieval times. The 55m tower has a cage high up on its exterior that is big enough to house a felon. Whether it was ever used for this purpose is not known, but it certainly made for a good deterrent. The Palace of the Podesta, like most of historic Mantua, is a brick building, and it dates from 1227. In a niche sits a statue of the poet Virgil, who was born in Pietole Vecchia, a village just outside what is now Mantua, in 70 BC. Despite the fact that there was no such place as Mantua in those days, he has been adopted as a local.

Over the centuries many people worked on the Basilica, including the prolific Giulio Romano, and Andrea Mantegna, who is buried in one of the chapels. Mantegna did a great deal to beautify Mantua during the rule of Lodovico III Gonzaga. He also promoted the image of Lodovico superbly in the Ducal Palace's Camera degli Sposi, where Mantegna frescoed an entire room with images of Lodovico, his family and court. The Gonzagas were famed as supporters of the arts, and Lodovico's devotion to Mantegna was so great that he insisted that the artist be treated as an aristocrat at court – and buried accordingly.

Emerging through the main doors of the Basilica I now felt ready to visit the Piazza delle Erbe, but first I had one more piece

Clockwise from left: The dome of the Basilica; at the Teatro Bibiena; side view of the nave at the Cathedral; the Palazzo della Ragione

of Mantegna to look at. Twenty metres away, in Piazza Marconi, an elaborately stuccoed house (above a gentleman's outfitters) depicts *The Clemency of Alexander*. More than 500 years later, the story of Alexander The Great vacating his throne so a dying soldier could be warmed by the fire is only just visible. Evidently Mantegna's daughter was married to the son of Viano, the merchant who commissioned this façade.

Now I made my way to Piazza Erbe, which is not so popular with locals because of the cafés – Osteria delle Erbe, Pavesi & Pavesino and Grifone Bianco – that spill out across the piazza in front of Palazzo della Ragione (Mantua's old courthouse). Most Italian cities have an area like this – Piazza San Marco in Venice, the Campo in Sienna – but, in my opinion, Piazza delle Erbe is the kind of place where anyone, visitor or local, would enjoy sitting out. You have the Clock Tower by Bartolomeo Manfredi, court astrologer and mathematician, the exquisitely carved Casa del Mercante built in 1455 for the merchant Giovan Boniforte, and San Lorenzo Rotonda. The latter is one of the most remarkable structures in Mantua. It's a tiny, circular church built in 1040 that actually disappeared from view – and public memory – until 1908 when the shops and houses that had built up around it were demolished.

From here I walked just a few blocks east to Teatro Bibiena, which is part of the neo-classical Palazzo Accademico but which takes its name from Antonio Galli Bibiena of Parma, who also designed the Teatro Comunale in Bologna. This much smaller project – a mere 363 seats stacked in five tiers –was built between 1767 and 1769 under the Hapsburgs, who took over Mantua after the Gonzaga line died out. In 1770, a year after it opened, the 13-year-old Mozart played here en route to Rome and Naples. Leopold Mozart was greatly impressed by the building, and by the reception his son received: "In all my life, I have never seen anything more beautiful of its kind."

On my way back to Piazza Sordello I got wonderfully lost and discovered two palazzos not in my guide book. The baroque Palazzo Sordi was built for Benedetto Sordi in 1680 by the Flemish architect Frans Geffels. On the plate of six doorbells I found that two members of the Sordi family still lived here. And almost next door was Casa dei Bertani, which the architect Giovanni Bertani bought and adapted for himself. Bertani had trained with Giulio Romano in Mantua and after Romano's death he was promoted to the post of Prefect of the Fabbriche ➤

Ducale. Bertani had been translating Vitruvius's designs from the Latin and here he imported two ionic marble columns from Verona that he inserted into the façade, inscribing one with Vitruvian details. The man was actually using his house to advertise his profession. By this time I was surfeiting on history. It is everywhere in Mantua.

The city had woken up by now and was busy going about its day. All these narrow streets, empty when I arrived, were now filled with pedestrians and cyclists, and men and women with small dogs. I don't think I've ever been in an Italian city with quite so many chihuahuas and pomeranians. I found my way back to Piazza delle Erbe along the course of Rio, crossing over it at the Pescherie, a bridge-cum-16th century fish market again designed by Giulio Romano.

In need of an espresso I paused at Caravatti, one of the oldest cafés in the city centre (where the waitress told me proudly that when in Mantua I should eschew prosecco in favour of their own aperitif of aromatic bitters and wine) and then went to see if I could get into my room in Palazzo Castiglioni.

Faustina the maid was now on hand to let me in and took me up to my room. It turned out to be a huge vault 10 metres high under the roof and big enough to hold a mayoral reception. She also pointed out the wonderful secular frescoes of animals and explained that the spiral staircase in the corner went up onto the roof, but to be careful climbing up as it wobbled. I had to try it out as soon as she left. On the top of the Castiglioni tower, I found myself facing straight into the dome of San Andrea with the Ducal Palace behind me. This was going to be an absolutely perfect place for sundowners when my wife arrived this afternoon. For such a small city Mantua, packs a huge amount of history. V

GETTING THERE

- OUI-SNCF (www.en.oui.sncf) offer return rail fares from London to Mantua from £216 standard class; the price includes the overnight train from Paris to Milan.
- British Airways (www.ba.com) flies daily from Gatwick to Verona. Mantua is 44km south of Verona Villafranca.
- Rhino (www.rhinocarhire.com) offers car hire at Verona Airport from around £13.50 per day.

FURTHER INFORMATION

- Mantua maintains an extensive and comprehensive tourism website at www.mantovatourism.it/en/discover-mantua

The spiral staircase in my room went up onto the roof – the perfect place for sundowners when my wife arrived this afternoon

From above: Sunset on the hotel roof; Piazza Castello

Sunset over Santa Maria della Salute, Venice

We like our holidays, how we like our pasta.

Different, diverse and delicious.

Malloreddus (Sardinia)

Beyond the gorgeous beaches and chic coastal towns of Sardinia you'll discover a rugged, rustic interior and uniquely Sardinian cuisine. Malloreddus {also called gnocchetti} are dinky little pastas to die for. How best to try them? One of the island's best traditional dishes - Malloreddus alla Campidanese.

Spaghetti (Campania)

There is so much to discover in Campania. The Amalfi Coast, Mount Vesuvius and Gragnano, birthplace of the modern pasta industry. And what better pasta than spaghetti to combine with fresh local seafood, San Marzano tomatoes and zesty Amalfi lemons? It takes the humble spaghetti somewhere amazing – try Spaghetti alle Vongole in a small waterfront café.

Italian pasta comes in all shapes and sizes. And it does so for a very good reason. We want pasta to do different things for us. Like soak up more {or less} sauce, twirl gorgeously around a fork or become a pocket for a mushroom and truffle filling. Often, you can trace a given type of pasta all the way back to the specific region of Italy where it was first created – in some cases, even to the actual village or the very street it first appeared. It's the knowledge, craft and loving artisan care of each and every swirl, curl and ripple that's been passed down by pasta makers through the generations that makes the pasta we love today.

Holidays are pretty much the same. They come in all shapes and sizes – and just like pasta, we need them to do very different, very individual things for us. At Long Travel, we know the value of knowing our Puglias from our Piedmonts.

With Italy, it's all about the knowledge. That's why, for over 30 years we've been creating holiday experiences in Italy that you can't forget.

Our customers love the tailored experience we bring them and the hidden gems we share – like that tiny bar in Sicily where you can become one of the locals. Talking to local people on the ground like this helps us to gain the precious local insights to help us shape your holiday around your needs, your likes and your dreams. So we invest the time to discover the inside stories. To talk to local people to see where they eat and chill out – even the secret cove they love to swim in. Snippet by snippet, year by year, it's given us the knowledge to make your Italian holiday experience one that is out of this world.

Orecchiette (Puglia)

Puglia, home of the distinctively shaped trulli houses and this equally uniquely regional pasta called orecchiette {or little ears}. Wander through local streets in Apulia and you'll see the Nonnas making these 'little ears' by hand as they have for centuries. Then, go seek out a delicious plate of Orecchiette Cime di Rapa for yourself.

Gigli (Tuscany)

Shaped like a cone with ruffled edges this pretty pasta is often called 'Gigli Toscani' – so no wonder the pasta makers of Tuscany claim it as a regional pasta. Also, gigli means lily and the lily has been the emblem of Florence and part of the city's coat of arms for around a thousand years. So when in Siena, Chianti or Florence, you'll know gigli's a real local.

Rigatoni (Sicily)

This large tube of pasta originates from the largest island in the Mediterranean, Sicily. An island filled with a rich range of historical influences that inspire its unique architecture, culture and cuisine. Equally, the typical ridges of rigatoni and its cavernous tube are filled with a rich array of local Sicilian sauces. Try Pasta alla Norma from the city of Catania.

Fileja (Calabria)

Calabria is the real Italy, unspoilt by progress. And fileja {also known as maccarruna or filedda} is a typical pasta of ancient origins from the Calabrian province of Vibo Valentia. True to Calabria's uncomplicated ways, fileja is made from poor and simple ingredients with wheat flour, water and salt and no eggs. Most typically eaten with a minced pork sauce or simple tomato sauce or if you like to spice things up – with Calabrian Nduja.

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