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ARRIVING & GETTING AROUND

AIRPORTS

popular with budget travellers with Easyjet offering numerous domestic and European connections. Marco Polo airport is just across the lagoon from the floating city with water taxis and waterbuses shuttling back and forth between Venice and the airport. Regular taxis and buses also con-nect the airport with Venice and Mestre.

There are a wide range of shops at the airport offering airport standards from

Galilei 30/1, Tessera-Venezia, tel. +39 041 260 9260, www.veniceairport.it.

GONDOLA

VENICE MARCO POLO AIRPORT Venice Marco Polo is one of Italy's main airports, serviced by world class airlines from Emirates to Alitalia - the national carrier, flights are available to over 60 international and domestic destinations. Marco Polo is also signed for shunting around the shallows of the Venetian lagoon and the mainstay of Venetian life and culture for centuries. The gondola may have

doliers, today's gondolas are basically just for tourists and yes they can cost an perfume and electronics to international newspapers whilst the regional deliar arm and a leg to ride in (though there are ways to keep costs down) however

meals whilst there are also a number of cafes and bars perfect for grabbing a obsessively alike - we haven't measured ourselves, but apparently they must has some 22 lines (some of which run seasonally) including countless lines sandwich and that last espresso/Campari of your trip to Venice. Via Galileo be 10.87m long and constructed using eight specific woods. So the question along the Canal Grande and connections with practically all of Venice's suris not which gondola to choose, but what you want to see. Tours can be preding islands such as Murano, famous for its blown glass. booked or you can negotiate a personalised itinerary with your gondolier - we Single use tickets start from €7 for 60 minutes, while tourist travel cards love exploring the narrow back canals where Venice's hidden beauty can be offer a much better value for most visitors, allowing unlimited travel for seen. The other big question, is of course, how much you are willing to spend. periods from 12 hours to 7 days. The official minimum fare is €80 per gondola (for up to 6 persons) for 40 min- Note: remember to stamp your ticket in the yellow machine before getutes. Prices fluctuate seasonally and can also depend on ones haggling skills, ting on the vaporetto. • www.actv.it though in general group tours during the day are the cheapest option. For those on tight budgets the seven Traghetto 'gondola ferries', which sim-WATER TAXIS ply shuttle back and forth across the Grand Canal, are a great way to have a One of the best ways to see Venice is from the water, and while gondolas may be the traditional favourite (and also the priciest option) the stunning

VAPORETTO

Vaporetto or waterbuses are the way the masses travel in Venice, whilst



fleets of luxury wooden water taxis have always taken our fancy (and are

from Marco Polo, they also shuttle visitors around Venice and between its

significantly less pricey). Water taxis don't just offer luxury airport transfers

inyour pocket essential city guides

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YDURSINY

INTRODUCING VENICE



Light traffic near Rialto Bridge on the Grand Canal just after sunse /ikimedia Commons/chensivuar

We first visited Venice more than a decade ago. Attempting to make the drive from Paris in a single day, we arrived sometime in the early morning hours and ended up sleeping in our rental car (a tiny grey Peugeot 206) to save money on a hotel. Unfortunately, it seems St Martha, the patron saint of hoteliers, was watching over our incredibly uncomfortable few hours of fax +39 041 241 3339, info@cortedigabriela.com, www.cortedigabriela.com. half-sleep, as we awoke to find a parking ticket on the windscreen! Failing to fully appreciate the irony of the situation, we grudgingly took the train from **CIPRIANI** Mestre on the mainland to the island(s) of Venice proper - definitely worse for wear and not exactly in the best of spirits, but still intent on checking another amous city off our bucket list.

But Venice is not just another famous city. You always remember your first ross the causeway or approach by boat. Regardless of the mood you're in, 's impossible not to be enchanted by the mere sight of the Most Serene Republic. Even for us, the city is still every bit as charming as it was on that orning more than a decade ago. Venice is a truly magical place, and there s simply nowhere like it in the world, which is our rather long-winded way of saying that we are very pleased to introduce our first, and much overdue, enice In Your Pocket (mini) guide. On the pages below we've just begun to cratch the surface of what Venice has to offer, and are currently preparing eep up to date on our progress online at venice.inyourpocket.com or on acebook. And if you have any questions, comments or feedback of any kind we'd love to hear it at venice@inyourpocket.com.

VENICE BY THE NUMBERS

271,000 inhabitants (commune 60,000 inhabitants (historic centre **20,000,000** tourists per year 121 islands in the historic centre 435 bridges 4 bridges over the Grand Canal 177 canals 42 kilometres of canals 400 licensed Gondolas 7.6 square kilometres (historic centre)

119 churches 50,000 people died from plague in 1630 120,000 pigeons

WHAT TO SEE



Take in Venice in all its glory from atop the Campanile, Flickr/Rob Young

ESSENTIAL SIGHTS

BASILICA DI SAN MARCO

behind both the church's construction and the way in which St Mark came to but as Venice's wealth and power grew so to did its central public space. ries, it's hard to argue with the results.

Of course history aside, the basilica itself is truly a sight to behold both astonishing 8000 square metres of gold mosaics, while the most impressive single work is the high altarpiece (the so-called Pala d'Oro or Golden Cloth), which depicts the story of St Mark and is encrusted with nearly 2000 **PONTE DI RIALTO** is the Church of Gold. ▶ E-4, San Marco 328, tel. +39 041 2708311, www. basilicasanmarco.it. Open 09:45-17:00, Sun and holidays 14:00-16:00, Bell Tower open 09:00-15:45 in winter, 09:00-19:00 in Oct and spring, d'Oro €2, Treasury €3, Bell Tower €8.

GRAND CANAL

the lagoon, the Grand Canal divides the main island of Venice roughly into collapsing under the weight of spectators watching a boat regatta. two halves on either side of a 3.8km long inverted S-shape, which leads In the mid-16th century, local authorities finally decided that the construc-San Marco. Its width varies between 30 and 90 metres, and in a testament from many of the top Italian architects of the period, including the none of four - the last of which was the controversial Ponte della Constitzione, which opened in 2008.

ice's version of the Champs-Elysées, and while the Grand Canal is indeed most famous and photographed bridges in the world. > D-3.

WHERE TO STAY

UPMARKET

BAUER PALLADIO HOTEL & SPA

he five-star Bauer Palladio offers an unbeatable location on the peaceful Siudecca island, just across the water from San Marco. As such, the views of Venice are breathtaking, some rooms looking out over the water and other over the hotel's tranguil gardens. In addition, there's a 450 square metre spa with eight treatment rooms, and the whole thing is housed in a 16th century convent. While several of the rooms look dated, the decor is impressive, with antiquated tapestries and paintings. A free shuttle boat runs between the hotel and San Marco. ► E-6, Giudecca 33, tel. +39 041 27 03 80 9/+39 041 52 07 02 2, fax +39 041 52 07 55 7, info@bauervenezia.com, www.palladiohotelspa.com, Open every day 24h/ a day. 50 rooms.

CORTE DI GABRIELA

Somewhere around 100 per cent of the hotels in Venice claim to be both classic and contemporary, but none manage this guite as well as Corte Di Gabriela in the San Marco district. The breakfast is utterly exquisite, often cooked by the manager of the hotel himself. It's this sort of hands-on service that truly encapsulates the feel of Corte Di Gabriela. They claim that no two rooms are alike, and they aren't wrong. One even has a circular bed! Venetian furnishings and frescoes provide a true 19thcentury atmosphere, all be it a 19th century with a free-to-use iPad provided in each room. ► D-4, Calle degli Avvocati - San Marco 3836, tel. +39 041 523 5077,

Located on Giudecca Island, Hotel Cipriani really is the definition of old world luxury. With glorious views of the Venice lagoon and the grand Palladian church of San Giorgo, Cipriani is an island of tranquility existing outside of the chaos of ${\sf BUDGET}$ the Piazza San Marco. Relaxation is the only option when faced with the beautiful gardens, Olympic-sized swimming pool and luxury wellness facilities. The rip here, your first glimpse of buildings rising up out of the lagoon as you room and waiting service borders on the unbelievable too, with nothing left to chance. ▶ E-6, Giudecca 10, tel. +39 041 240 801/+39 01 852 678 451, fax +39 041 520 3930, reservations@hotelcipriani.net, www.hotelcipriani.com.

DANIELI

The Danieli promises convenience, comfort and atmosphere, and they aren't far wrong. The views are breathtaking and the location simply cannot be beaten. There's a reason the Danieli was chosen as the location for large parts of The Tourist, as well as being the hotel of choice for Dickens, Byron, Goethe ams more content for the release of our full guide later this year. Until then and Steven Spielberg. It's all elegant columns and old style wooden floors, brining to life the Venice that exists in the minds of most. > E-4, Riva degli Schiavoni 4196, tel. +39 041 522 6480, fax +39 041 5200 208, danieli@ luxurycollection.com, www.danielihotelvenice.com.

GRITTI PALACE

When thinking of the Gritti Palace, only one word springs to our mind: total luxurious elegance. Okay, that's three words, but there's no way of truly describing this hotel in a single word. It is grand, it is lavish and it is exactly what the name would suggest. Somehow a relaxed air is maintained throughout. The rooms are spacious, the food is excellent and the veranda bar gives you wonderful views over Venice with cocktails to die for, for want of a better phrase. Gritti Palace is the definition of opulence. > D-4, Campo Santa Maria del Giglio, 2467, tel. +39 041 794611, fax +39 041 5200942, grittipalace@luxurycollection.com, www. thegrittipalace.com.

LONDRA PALACE

In a city full of hotels renowned for their beautiful views of Venice's endless canals, the ones afforded to you by the Londra Palace really take the biscuit. Whether you're sipping coffee at sunrise or downing cocktails at sunset. Venice

WHAT TO SEE

on par with its Parisian counterpart in terms of worldwide recognition the comparison is not entirely accurate. For instance, you won't find many shops, restaurants or pavement cafés lining its banks, as only short sec tions of the canal actually have pavement. Along much of the Grand Canal, the turguoise waters gently splash up against the fronts of the some 200 palaces and other historic buildings found along its path.

Many of the residences were built between the 13th and 18th centuries by wealthy families, who often competed amongst each other to see who could build the most splendid and ornate homes, with Venetian interpretations of Byzantine. Gothic, Baroque and Neoclassical architectural styles all well-represented. Of course the undisputed winners of these noble rivalries are the modern day tourists who get to view magnificent facades while traversing the canal. In fact, you could likely spend a lifetime making daily trips on and down the waterway, and still find new sights to feast one's eves on each time.

PIAZZA SAN MARCO

he heart and soul of historic Venice, the drawing room of Europe (according to Napoleon), ground zero for the millions of tourists that pour into the city each year - Piazza San Marco is truly one of the world's most famous and impressive squares. Not overwhelmingly massive in size, it does feel quite large relative to the labyrinth of narrow streets, passageways and canals that most visitors have to navigate to arrive there. When the Basilica of San Marco was first con-While the magnificent Byzantine-style Basilica of San Marco is Venice's most structed at the beginning of the 9th century, the square that lay in front of it ecognisable sight, most people are likely unaware of the rather roguish history was little more than a grassy patch of land no more than 60 metres in length, be the city's patron saint. The short version of the story is that it was originally The piazza was expanded to its present size during the late 12th century built in 828 to house the remains of Mark the Evangelist, which were stolen when the Rio Baratario canal was filled in and the Church of San Geminiano rom their resting place in Alexandria by Venetian merchants and smuggled was demolished and moved much further to the west. The instantly recout of Egypt hidden beneath pork and cabbage (to dissuade Muslim customs ognisable Campanile took its present form in 1514, while the three-story agents from finding them). The reason for this holy heist? The Doge was con- buildings that still stand to the north and south were slowly built and rehe 1500s. In 1810, the twice unlucky Church of San G pernatural protection bestowed upon it by possessing the relics of one of was once again demolished from its position at the western end of the he original apostles. And given what transpired in the following nine centu- square to make room for what is now known as the Napoleonic Wing, on the personal orders of the Little Corporal himself.

The smaller lagoon-facing square to the southwest may be officially known inside and out, with its trademark domes and golden mosaics dominating by the diminutive title Piazzetta San Marco, but it does have claim to just as the eastern edge of its namesake square. Dating from the end of the 11th many points of interest as its larger sibling, including the Doge's Palace, the century, its current form follows the layout of a Greek cross and is based on Biblioteca Marciana (one of Italy's most important libraries), and two large the Church of the Holy Apostle in Istanbul. The ceilings are covered with an granite columns topped by two greatly important symbols: the winged Lion of Venice and St Theodore, the city's original patron saint. \blacktriangleright E-4.

precious gems. All things considered, it's not hard to see why it's nickname One of Venice's most iconic sights, the Rialto bridge is also one of only four spans that cross the nearly 4km length of the Grand Canal. Taking its name from the the historical financial and commercial district found in its immediate area (which itself is derived from the Italian for 'high bank'), the 09:00-21:00 in summer. Admission to basilica free, museum €5, Pala bridge's first incarnation was as a floating pontoon structure built at the end of 12th century, which was shortly upgraded to a more permanent wooden bridge in 1255. However, in the three centuries that followed, the bridge was destroyed and rebuilt no less than three times - once by the ollowing the path carved out by an ancient river that once flowed into great fire of 1514 that engulfed the whole Rialto neighbourhood, and twice

om Santa Lucia train station to the Giudecca Canal and the edge of Piazza tion of a more resilient stone bridge was called for, and received proposals the city's water-centric mentality it was only crossed by a single bridge other than Michelangelo himself. However, the commission was won by Ponte di Rialto) until the 19th century, and today there are still only a total the little known, but aptly named, Venetian architect Antonio da Ponte, whose design was considered quite audacious at the time, and openly ridi culed by several of his contemporaries. Of course it was da Ponte who got The world's most famous aquatic thoroughfare is often described as Ven- the proverbial last laugh, as his magnum opus went on to become one the

WHERE TO STAY

comes alive from the various rooms of the Londra Palace. Speaking of those cocktails, they may be pricey but they also happen to be fantastic. The restaurant offers great food with generous portions, something that should be applauded in a hotel of such class. ▶ E-4, Riva Degli Schiavoni - Castello 4171, tel. +39 041 52 00 53 3, fax +39 041 52 25 03 2, info@hotelondra.it, www hotelondra.it

MOLINO STUCKY HILTON VENICE

Situated in a 19th century flour mill, the Hilton Molino Stucky describes itself as a 'modern Venetian masterpiece' and that might just be an understatement imber beamed ceilings dominate the elegant bedrooms, and there is a 24nour fitness centre free to use by guests. However, for us the real star of this show is the rooftop swimming pool, situated 35m above sea-level. There isn't a better place to watch the sun go down (or go for a swim) in the city. ▶ B-5, Giudecca 810, tel. +39 041 27 23 31 1, fax +39 041 27 23 30 8, info.venice@ hilton.com, www.molinostuckyhilton.com. Open 24h/ a day.

THE WESTIN EUROPA & REGINA

s strange as it might sound for a hotel where you can easily spend €500 a Dining al fresco on the Giudecca Canal, photo by YMB ight for a double room, there might not be better value for location in Venice AL BACCO FELICE han the Westin. With rooms overlooking the Grand Canal, the addition of its own personal pier for a water taxi arrival embellishes the romance of this hotel. Can a fine-dining pizzeria truly exist? Al Bacco Felice suggests that it can. A fantastic place for a slow, relaxed lunch, this small unassuming eatery provides Bar Tiepolo inside is a little on the expensive side, but when sipping in such a pleasant atmosphere that's perfect for watching the day go by. The staff acandiose surroundings it's easy to see why. Late at night the terrace bar comes ive. Great beds too. > D-4, San Marco 2159, tel. +39 041 24 00 01, fax +39 centuate this, with a stress-free attitude to service that contrasts with many other places in the city. There's a €2 cover charge per person, but don't let 041 52 31 53 3, europa.regina@westin.com, www.westin.com. Open every hat stop you from enjoying some of the best pizza in town. ▶ B-3, Colle deday 24h/ a day. 185 rooms. gli Amai 197/E. Santa Croce, tel. +39 041 528 7794, albaccofelice@libero.it. Open 12:00 - 15:30, 18:30-23:00, Sat, Sun 12:00 - 23:30.

CASA SANT'ANDREA

netimes 'no frills' is just what the doctor ordered. Casa Sant'Andrea could be defined as such, an certainly considered basic, but as far as affordable options n a notoriously expensive city go it's one of the best. Situated in an old monastery, it's in a great location for the bus to and from the airport as well as being a frequently used stop on the vaporetto (waterbus) routes. Wake up to the old monastery bell and explore Venice before the crowds fill the streets. ▶ B-3, Sestiere Santa Croce 495/B, tel. +39 041 277 0945, info@casasantandrea.it, www.casasantandrea.it.

GENERATOR VENICE

In the historical Giudecca island in south central Venice, Generator Venice is one of the best (and only) accommodation options in the city for those on a ghter budget. Dorms, quads and private en-suite rooms are all available here, and each bed comes with an individual plug and LED light for some late-night eading. The real joy is in the downstairs 360 bar however, an area that is perfect for socialising over a beer or two. The see-through shower doors are a bit trange, but we all have our quirks. > D-6, Fondamenta Zitelle 86, Guidecca, tel. +39 041 877 8288, info@ostellovenezia.it, generatorhostels.com.

OSTELLA SANTA FOSCA

taly is known for many things, and a long Catholic history is one of those ostella Santa Fosca is located in an old church campus, giving you the opportunity to sleep in this very same history. It's also connected to a uniersity residence hall, so the atmosphere is a bit more lively and youthful than your average church. Unlimited free tea and coffee can keep even the leepiest going, and the staff are extremely adept at providing advice on your time in Venice. One thing to be aware of however, the common room oses at 20:00 and the reception times are guite strict. > D-2, Fondamenta Canal, Cannaregio 2372, tel. +39 041 715 775, ostello@santafosca.it, www.ostellosantafosca.it

WHAT TO SEE

BRIDGES

PONTE DEI SOSPIRI (BRIDGE OF SIGHS)

Given its peculiar name by Lord Byron, Venice's Bridge of Sighs still emanates histov from its every surface. Built in 1602 after the design by the nephew of Antonio da Ponte (of Rialto bridge fame), the covered stone structure connects the New Prison with the Doge's Palace. The view of Venice through the bridges windows and stone grills was the last that convicts saw before serving their sentences, and legend has it that if a couple kisses on a gondola underneath during sunset while the bells of the Campanile are ringing, they shall be granted eternal love and bliss. Take the tour at the Doge's Palace to see that grave, sigh-inducing view for yourself. ▶ E-4.

PONTE DEI PUGNI (THE BRIDGE OF FISTS)

In the 17th century, autumn in Venice was fighting season. For many reasons be they clashing romantic interests or trade squabbles, men would meet on neighbourhood bridges in order to settle the issue with their fists. These fisticuffs weren't approved by the law enforcement, but they were deemed much better than the sharpened stick fights that were the norm previously. The most amous of these bridges was Ponte dei Pugni, near Campo Santa Barnaba in Dorsoduro. Today four white marble footprints mark the position from where the fighters would begin. ▶ C-4, Campo San Barnaba.

CHURCHES

BASILICA DI SANTA MARIA DELLA SALUTE

Don't be deceived by the beauty of the exterior of the Doge's Palace, Piazza San Marco, for justice was served decidedly brutally here, particularly for the crime of treason. The seat of the supreme rulers of the Venetian empire until 1797, Palazzo Ducale is a wonderful example of Venetian Gothic architecture, where every column is different. An awesome sight even from an exterior glance, the two possible tours reveal at least some of the layers of history, the standard tour leading the (literally) hourdes of visitors (over one million in 2010) through rooms of painted ceilings, featuring paintings by Titian, Tintoretto and Veronese, majestic staircases and the grave bridge of sighs, where prisoners would take their last walk to their fate. Of course, In a city full of classic, instantly recognisable sights, it is the silhouette of each room also has its secret passageways, prison cells and there's even a torture what the locals lovingly refer to as La Salute that finds its way into the chamber, the secret tour opening these up to our modern gaze. The great seducer, background of perhaps the most photographs and canvasses. Built in the Casanova, was the first to break this gargantuous bastion of power, escaping from 17th century to celebrate the ending of the plague, subtlety was not someone of the prisons. The palace has been open as a museum since 1923. **E-4, San** dragon. We're skeptical, but you never truly know. thing on the artist's agenda. The huge octagonal building was constructed Marco 1, tel. +39 041 271 5911, info@fmcvenezia.it, palazzoducale.visitmuve.it. on a platform of more than one million wooden piles, taking more t 50 years to complete. In contrast to the bright gold of the Basilica di San TEATRO LA FENICE Marco, the interior here is much more austere, but it is home to works of Is there a more aptly named theatre in the entire world? La Fenice (the Phoeart by luminaries such as Tintoretto and Titian, as well as many exquisite nix) has guite literally risen from the flames on two separate occasions during its stone sculptures. > D-5, Fondamenta Salute, tel. +39 041 241 1018. Open more than two-century history. Fires in 1836 and 1996 couldn't hinder its reputa-09:00 - 12:00, 15:00-17:30.



The Basilica di Santa Maria della Salute as seen from Giudecca Island, Flickr/Torcello Trio

WHERE TO EAT

ALS REDAKED

ANTICO MARTINI

The Antico Martini started out as a coffee shop in 1720 and has since grown into one of Venice's top restaurants, these days serving up fine Venetian specialities with an emphasis on seafood. Being on San Fantin square, the terrace is too good to miss when the weather is nice, otherwise there are the three elegant dining rooms. The Fenice theatre is adjacent, making it perfect for preshow dinner or after-show drinks, while the proprietor's nearby piano bar (San Marco 2007) is also open from 22:00. ► D-4, San Marco 1983, tel. +39 041 52 37 02 7/+39 041 52 24 12 1, info@anticomartini.com, www.anticomartini. com. Open . Closed Tue. $\in \in \in \in$.

AROMI

The Venice Hilton's flagship restaurant Aromi goes a long way towards proving that the south of the country doesn't have a monopoly on quality Mediterranean food. Open from April until October, diners have a choice of either the interior dining room or the panoramic terrace - the latter is quite obviously the better choice, affording guests magnificent views of the Giudecca canal and Venice's skyline. Sure, the prices are typical of the Hilton name, but the sophisticated setting makes you feel like you're at least getting your money's worth. ▶ B-5, Giudecca 810, tel. +39 041 2723 311, www.molinostuckyhilton.com. Open 19:00 - 22:30. €€€€.

BACARO OSTERIA BARABABAO

Some may call the décor unconventional, but we think it adds extra layers of enchantment to Barababao. Hidden down a narrow lane just a few minutes' walk from Rialto bridge in the Cannaregio district, those who find it will be rewarded with a complimentary glass of Prosecco upon arrival their arrival. All the food is prepared to order to guarantee some of the freshest meals in the city, and the servings are generous to say the least. Plus anything with black squid ink on the menu is fine with us. ► E-3, Cannaregio 5835, tel. +39 041 522 1061, info@barababao.it, nuke.barababao.it.

WHAT TO SEE



tion as one of the most famous theatres in Europe. And what visit to Italy is complete without a trip to the opera? If you can't make a show, the theatre is open rom 9:30 to 18:30 every day for tours. costina €9 with discounts for students. The stunning interior is worth every Euro. ► D-4, Campo San Fantin 1965, tel. +39 041 786 511, www.teatrolafenice.it.

ISLANDS BURANO

Whilst much of Venice itself could be considered hugely photogenic, Burano might just be the very definition of the term. This residential archipelage some 40 minutes from Venice by boat is one bright house after another, the whole place resembling the most intense of colour explosions. Burano really is a photographer's paradise. Originally used to show where each famly's quarters ended, the choice of colours is now strictly controlled by the overnment. The island has also always been famous for its handmade lace roducts, as well as its yellow 'S' shaped biscuits. Be sure to try them!

LAZZARETTO NUOVO AND THE VAMPIRES OF VENICE

What started out as a peaceful monastic centre would become a hellhole. In 1468, Lazzaretto Nuovo (Italian for 'new guarantine') was converted into a plague stop fo ships arriving in Venice from the east, and anyone suspected of carrying the plague was summarily left here to perish. The island was back in the headlines in 2005 when the skull of a woman was discovered with a brick shoved into her jaw. During the Middle Ages, this was one of the more reputable methods of killing vampires whom it was believed were responsible for spreading the plague. Fun! Nowadays,

WHERE TO EAT

CÀ D'ORO ALLA VEDOVA

ruth be told, there are only two things you truly need to know about Alla Vedova: authenticity and meatballs. Don't expect hoards of tourists here, this truly is Venetian cuisine off the beaten track. It's the type of restaurant that attracts mainly locals, most of whom seem to be instinctively drawn here by the sheer quality of their meatballs. Full of flavour, we really can't recommend them enough. One thing to note, they don't accept credit cards, so carry cash when isiting. ► D-2, Calle del Pistor, Cannaregio 3912, tel. +39 041 528 5324. Open 11:30 - 14:30, 18:30-22:30, Sun 18:30 - 23:00. Closed Thu.

HARRY'S BAR

larry's bar was opened in 1931 by former bartender Giuseppe Cipriani. It has ince acquired legendary status, courtesy of a patronage including the likes of Charlie Chaplin, Earnest Hemingway, Alfred Hitchcock and Orson Welles. Still un by the Cipriani family, Harry's currently has a full menu including soups, andwiches, scampi and veal mains (among others) and of course, Harry's Dolci cake for dessert. If nothing else, come for the cocktails; the Bellini and Carpaccio were actually invented here. ► D-4, San marco 1323, tel. +39 041 52 85 77 7, fax +39 041 52 08 82 2, harrysbar@cipriani.com, www.cipriani. com. Open 10:30 - 23:30. 20€ - 50€. €€€€.

GAM GAM KOSHER

The only Kosher restaurant in all of Venice, Gam Gam is something special. Sitting right at the entrance to the oldest ghetto in the world. Gam Gam cooks up homev food with huge variety and even bigger portions - seriously, these are some big portions! It's very popular, so we recommend making a reservation ahead of time. Head there on a Saturday evening for Shabbat, where meals are free, costing just a suggested donation. The rest of the week is still inexpensive, with most of the mains under €15. ▶ C-2, Ghetto Vecchio, Sestiere Cannaregio 1122, tel. +39 041 275 9256/+39 366 250 4505, info@jewishvenice.org, gamgamkosher.com. Open 12:00 - 22:00.

IL RIDOTTO

Down a side street just off Piazza San Marco, Il Ridotto (which translates as 'reduced') is a delightfully romantic intimate experience. The two-course lunch tasting menu is good value at €28, and the attentive and well-humoured staff will add to your enjoyment. They'll also help out with the rather intimidating wine list, which has a great selection of choices by the glass. The food is fresh and full of gutsy local flavours, and its popularity with the locals can only be a good thing. Book ahead to avoid disappointment. > E-4, Campiello Santi Filippo e Giacomo, Castello 4509, tel. +39 041 520 8280, info@ilridotto. com, www.ilridotto.com. €€.

MET RESTAURANT

The charge of stagnation is something that Luca Veritti and his staff at the Me Restaurant can't be accused of. This Michelin star restaurant is unique in that it offers Tra'Contemporary cuisine, helping it to stand out brighter than most. The idea is simple enough: traditional recipes deconstructed with a modern spin. The result can bring out some peculiar aesthetics, but this is truly a rare joy. The décor is all 17th century paintings and antiques, topping off this most unique of gastronomic experiences. ► F-4, Riva degli Schiavoni, Castello 4149, tel. +39 041 5240034, met@hotelmetropole.com, www.hotelmetropole.com.

MIRAI

In a sea, or rather lagoon, of only Venetian and Italian dining options, some will inevitably tire of all the pasta and seafood sauces and crave for something different. Asian cuisine is not very well represented here in Venice, but Mirai offers a more than acceptable alternative. With fresh market bought fish they churn out some very respectable sashimi, maguro and tempura, which despite being expensive, are to a comparable standard of the US or other more sushi-fond European cities. Located near the train station. ► C-2, Rio Terà Lista de Spagna, Cannaregio 227, tel. +39 041 220 6517, www.miraivenice.com. Open 19:30 - 23:00. Closed Mon.

WHAT TO SEE

you can visit the island from April till October and explore the detailed archives of its nusual history. Book ahead for a tour in English. > Isola del Lazzaretto Nuovo, tel. +39 041 244 4011, info@lazzarettonuovo.com, lazzarettonuovo.com.

LIDO

Venice's Lido is the original, the term having been been appropriated by the British to refer to public swimming pools sometime in the mid-1930s. With large sandy beaches (some private, some public) and quiet open space, it's good as summer retreat from the crowds for a stroll or spot of cycling. Most famously, Lido is home to the Venice Film Festival, which is held here every September. Other than that there's the Grand Hotel Excelsior and Grand Hotel des Bains, the latter made famous by Thomas Mann's Death in Venice. The lagoon side of the island has a Vaporetto water bus stop, from which the main street, the Gran Viale Santa Maria Elisabetta, leads to the island's eastern shore, on the Adriatic sea.

MURANO

his archipelago one mile north of Venice is known worldwide for one thing: glass There is barely a single upscale hotel in all of Italy, let alone Venice, that doesn't make a point of talking up the Murano glass chandeliers they possess, and with good reason. Murano had a monopoly on glass-making for centuries, and it was the most elite of professions in Venice, making Murano the most famous of Venice's archipelagos. The glass has been produced since the 10th century, but it wasn't until 1291 that it gained its inflated status. It was in that year that all of the glassmaking factories in Venice were moved to Murano due to the fear of potential fires Whilst the majority of the best glass factories today are closed to visitors, you can still visit a couple of them, as well as the Glass Museum in Palazzo Giustinian near the centre of Murano. There are also a total of four churches, although only two are open for visitors. The more impressive of the two is the Basilica del Santa Maria e San Donato. Legend has it that it houses the bones of a slain

Visit the archipelago by taking vaporetto number 12, 13 or 52 from Fonda-Nuove, or the number 52

SAN SERVOLO INSANE ASYLUM

Okay, so an insane asylum might not sound like the most enjoyable place to spend an afternoon while on holiday in Venice, but there's no denying it can be a hugely fascinating experience. San Servolo Island earned the unflattering nickname the 'Island of the Mad' by serving as the official mental asylum for Venice from 1725 until 1978. It has been open as a museum since 2006. Divided into nine sections (one of which is cheerily titled 'the Sick') and containing a photo album of patients, this is one of Venice's most macabre yet captivating sights. Vaporetto 20 makes the 10-minute journey here from the San Zaccaria pier near San Marco every hour or so. ▶ Isola di San Servolo, tel. +39 041 2765451/+39 041 5267871, info@ fondazionesanservolo.it, www.fondazionesanservolo.it.



The weatherbeaten façade of the Doge's Palace on Piazzetta San Marco, Flickr/archer10

WHERE TO EAT

OSTERIA ALLE TESTIERE

A simple trattoria both inside and out, this eatery becomes a Michelin acclaimed gem when their amazing food is tasted. Widely praised, we waited in anticipation for the 19:00 sitting, with 20 or so other lucky diners (the restaurant seats an exclusive 24), and weren't disappointed. Of all the fine dining in Venice, nothing gives the satisfaction more than the understated. Perfectly cooked scallops, prawns in 'busara' sauce, and a divine pumpkin ravioli were all top notch. Located a few hundred me tres north of Piazza San Marco. ► E-3, Castello 5801, Calle del Mondo Novo, tel./fax 0039 041 52 27 22 0, osterialletestiere@yahoo.it, www. osterialletestiere.it. Open 12:00 - 15:00, 19:00-23:00. Closed Mon, Sun

OSTERIA DA FIORE

What isn't there to love about eating in an old Venetian tavern? Thi odd yet charming space provides guality cuisine, all be it with often challenging ingredients. The subtle tastes on the menu might not fit all palettes, but the elegance of Da Fiore is undeniable. Book well ahead in order to secure the balcony table overlooking the canals, surely one of the most romantic spots in the entire city. > C-3, San Polo 2002, tel. +39 (041) 721308, info@dafiore.net, www.dafiore.net. Open 12:30 -14:30, 19:30-22:30. Closed Mon, Sun. €€.

OUADRI

The only fine dining experience to be had on San Marco piazza itself, the Quadri is one of the city's top restaurants. Featuring some of the first dar wood furnishings and sparkling chandeliers that would come to character ise a guintessential Venetian dining room, it is presently run by the Alajmo family. Silvio Giavedoni and the sous chef Denis Mattiuzzi maintain a menu of increasingly traditional Venetian cuisine, the fish coming direct from the city's lagoons and Rialto market every day. Tasting menus range from €180-220 without wine. > E-4, 720 Sestiere San Marco, tel. 0039 041 52 89 29 9 fax 0039 41 52 08 04 1, quadri@quadrivenice.com, www.quadrivenice. com. Open 12:00 - 14:30; 19:00 - 22:30. Closed Mon. €€€€.

TRATTORIA CORTE SCONTA

Don't let the unassuming façade fool you, inside this little restaurant is a beautiful courtyard perfect for outdoor dining. This is traditional food done well. It can be a little tough to find, down narrow alleys and anonymous streets, but it is worth the effort. Vegan and gluten-free choices are also available. The immense selection of antipasti can be daunting, but the attentive staff will help you out at a moments notice. ▶ F-4,Calle de Pestrin 3886, Castello, tel. +39 041 522 7024, corte.sconta@yahoo.it. Open 12:30 - 14:30, 19:00-21:30. Closed Mon, Sun.

VENISSA

In Venice, fine dining isn't restricted to the main island. Hop on the Moto nave ferry and take a half-hour journey out to the little island of Mazzorbo Formerly a spiritual retreat for the rich, Mazzorbo is now home to Venissa an estate that is home to vineyards, a small guesthouse and this wonder fully elegant restaurant. To call it idyllic would be doing it a disservice. The setting is reflected in the delightful food, with ingredients almost entirely sourced from the surroundings. The seasonal nature of the cuisine means the menu changes almost daily. Venice simply doesn't get any more tran quil. > Fondamenta Santa Catarina 3, Isola di Mazzorbo, tel. +39 041 52 72 281, fax +39 041 52 72 323, info@venissa.it, venissa.it.

Many more restaurants online at venice.inyourpocket.com

WHAT TO SEE

CARNEVALE DI VENENZIA

15.02 SATURDAY - 04.03 TUESDAY

Aside from the outlandish parties that engulf the streets of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil each year, Venice's Carnival is easily the world's most famous celebration ostensibly held to mark the beginning of the 40-day fasting period before Easter known as Lent. And while Rio may have the advantage of a tropical climate, Venice's Carnival tradition not only outdates its South American rival by over seven centuries, but the very word 'carnival is derived from the Latin phrase meaning 'farewell to meat'.

Although written documents first mention Carnival-like parties in Venice at the end of the 11th century, historians point to the year 1162 as the official beginning of the event, which celebrated the victory over and subsequent public humiliation of the Patriarch of Aguileia, and was so much fun that it became an annual event. Masks first began appearing a century later, and as the power of the Venetian Republic grew, so too did the festivities - reaching the point where masks were worn for up to half the year by the end of the 18th century!

Of course all good things come to an end, and when the historically stodgy Austrians took control of the city in 1798, masks were forbidden in public and the tradition all but died out, until being revived in 1979 as a way to spur tourism and economic growth. But the plan worked perhaps too well, as nowadays it's estimated that some three million visitors crowd into Venice during the two-week long festival each year, almost literally packing every square metre of pavement in the city's historic centre. If you'd like to be part of the fantastic chaos, the full programme of event and lots of other info can be found well in advance on the official website. **• www.carnevale.venezia.it**.

JEWISH VENICE THE VENETIAN GHETTO

Believe it or not, the first ghetto in recorded history can be found in Venice. Founded in 1516 in an area of Canneregio district, this is where the Jewish population of Venice lived during the Venetian Republic. The very word 'ghetto' that we know today came from the Venetian word geto, which translates rather unflatteringly as 'slag' or 'waste', a reference to the large number of foundries in the area. Today, the area is the centre of Jewish life in the city, with five synagogues still standing, as well as a museum of Jewish art. Shabbat, the seventh day of the Jewish calendar is celebrated every Saturday here - arrive early to experience the lively atmosphere. See the very infomative website of the Jewish Community in Venice, or visit the info point at Cannaregio 1222, ▶ C-1, tel. +39 041 523 7565, info@jvenice.org, www.jvenice.org.

MUSEUMS & GALLERIES GALLERIE DELL'ACCADEMIA

The gallery you should visit for a broad overview of Venetian and Italian Rennaissance art, the Gallerie dell'Accademia housing a pre-19th century museum collection of paintings from numerous big names. There are more than 20 medium sized rooms with works from Bellini, Canaletto, Carpaccio, Giorgioni (The Tempest) and Paulo Veronese (Feast in the House of Levi), and the Drawing of Vitruvian Man by Leonardo Da Vinci undoubtedly draws the biggest crowds. Set in the old bulding of the cuola della Carità, it was once the gallery of the art academy of Venice, the name of which the Vaporetto stop and a nearby bridge still bear (Accademia and Ponte dell'Accademia). Beware entries are limited to a total of 300 so head there before noon for the best chance of not waiting in line. ► C-4/5, Campo della Carità 1050, tel. +39 041 520 0345, info@ gallerieaccademia.org, www.gallerieaccademia.org.

HISTORIC BUILDINGS PALAZZO DUCALE (THE DOGE'S PALACE)