Cities Destinations Travel Interest

Venice: What You Should Know Before You Go

November 1, 2021 Kwin Mosby

Over the past few weeks, there have been a few reasons why you should consider traveling to Italy, specifically Venice. The City of Canals is experiencing flooding again, which should expedite your plans to explore the magnificent city. According to Culture Trip, a "study suggests that Venice could be underwater by 2100 if the acceleration of global warming is not curbed." Basically, the ground level of the city is sinking, but there's no better time than the present to start planning your dream trip.

Editor's Note: *Those who travel are strongly encouraged to check local government restrictions, rules, and safety measures related to COVID-19 and take personal comfort levels and health conditions into consideration before traveling.*

High water at St. Mark's Square in Venice, Italy (Photo Credit: iStock)

Getting There
Alitalia's successor ITA Airways started its inaugural flights to and from Italy on Oct. 15, 2021. Former Alitalia employees are protesting because the new airline only hired a quarter of Alitalia's former workforce of more than 10,000 employees. But it's an option in addition to U.S. airlines that have direct flights to cities in Italy.

Neos Air's Premium Freedom Class (Photo Credit: Kwin Mosby)

American vacationers can also get to Italy via Neos Air, a direct flight option from John F. Kennedy

International Airport to Milan-Malpensa airport. The flights depart New York at 5:50 p.m. and arrive in Milan at 7:20 a.m. the next day. Departures from Milan leave at 12:20 p.m. and arrive in New York at 2:50 p.m.

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Regardless of what airline you take, I suggest building in a few extra days to explore the city closest to the airport where you land, whether that be Milan or Rome. If you land in Milan, you can take a connecting flight to the Venice Airport. I had a private car pick me up at the airport and take me to Milano Centrale Train Station, where I hopped on an ItaliaRail train. It's a great option if you want to see the small cities between Milan and Venice.

Venice, Italy (Photo Credit: Kwin Mosby)

Once you're in Venice, you can catch a water taxi to your hotel. In my case, a private water taxi met me outside of the train station to take me to my hotel, Ca' di Dio.

While in Venice, I'd recommend indulging in a few immersive experiences that you can do on your own or you can request your hotel's concierge to assist you in arranging tours and other activities. Here are a few of my recommendations on what you should see and do when visiting Venice.

Grand Canal in Venice, Italy (Photo Credit: Kwin Mosby)

Explore Venice on Foot and by Boat
At the Ca' di Dio, my concierge arranged a private boat tour and walking tour with local archeologist and tour guide Maria Andrea Guana. She gave me an in-depth overview of the city's history, how it was built, and we also to a leisurely stroll through some of the city's most popular districts, including San Marco and Dorsoduro. Within three hours, I saw dozens of iconic sights and really enjoyed learning more about The Floating City. Another important reason to take a city tour is to get your bearings and understand the layout of the city; then, you assess how to get to the places you want to visit and return to those interesting spots on the tour you want to spend more time exploring.

Gucci in Venice's San Marco District (Photo Credit: Kwin Mosby)

Shop 'Til You Drop

Just east of St. Mark's Square – also a must-see stop – tourists can explore the San Marco district, which has a long list of high-end stores, including Versace, Louis Vuitton, Prada, Gucci, and Bulgari. There are more moderately-priced brands in the area too, such as Diesel, Sisley, and Benetton. And according to my tour guide, apparently, the Venetian slipper is a hot commodity these days. So stop by Piedàterre and pick out a colorful pair or two.

FLORIAN
TEA-ROOM

Café Florian on St. Mark's Square is the oldest cafe in Europe (Photo Credit: Stock)

Sit at a Café for Prime People Watching

Who doesn't like people watching while sipping on a cup of coffee, a glass of wine, or perhaps, an Aperol Spritz? If that's your thing, enjoy busy San Marco square while sitting at Café Aurora or Café Florian. One of my favorite spots was Osteria Al Squero, where you can grab a glass of wine and watch skilled craftsmen across the canal repair and create exquisite gondolas.

RISTORANTE DA IVO

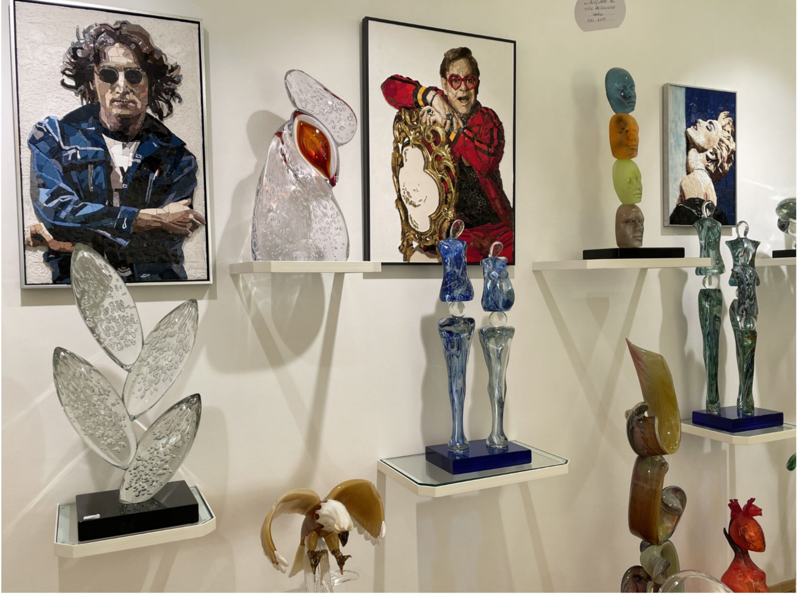
Ristorante Da Ivo is George Clooney's favorite restaurant in Venice (Photo Credit: Kwin Mosby)

Savor Palate-Pleasing Italian Wine and Food

You can never go wrong with the food in Venice. I didn't have a bad meal during my stay, and I'd have to guess that is because the food is fresh, specifically the seafood dishes. For lunch, Bacarando Corte dell'Orso was a restaurant Luca and Ale (aka The Globbers) recommended. It served Italian staples such as fresh calamari or lasagna made with fresh homemade pasta. Avoid the wait to be seated and walk to the back of the restaurant where limited outdoor seating may be available. Luca and Ale also recommended the Fondaco dei Tedeschi where you can have a cocktail and enjoy 360-degree views of the city from the rooftop.

Lasagna made with fresh pasta at Bacarando Corte dell'Orso (Photo Credit: Kwin Mosby)

If you're looking for more sustenance, enjoy a four-course meal at Taverna La Fenice, where each item on the menu has a recommended wine pairing. If you want to feel like a celebrity, consider dining at George Clooney's favorite restaurant, Ristorante Da Ivo, where reservations are necessary. Honestly, it's a great idea to make a reservation in advance especially if you want to dine at a reputable or popular restaurant. And if you're looking for more suggestions, talk to the locals, including your hotel concierge. They have that insider's knowledge on the place places to eat in the city.



Glassware and portraits made with Murano glass at Vetreria Artistica. (Photo Credit: Kwin Mosby)

Spend a Day Exploring the Venetian Islands

In addition to Venice, I'd recommend spending the day strolling through the streets of a few islands, including Lido, where J. Lo and Ben Affleck were seen booed up at the Venice Film Festival.

If you're interested in glassware, you can't miss out on visiting Murano to tour a local glass factory, like Vetreria Artistica, where actors Ed Norton and Sylvester Stallone bought artwork made out of Murano glass. I got a kick out of watching glassblowers create a fragile glass figurine of a horse in front of my eyes. Marco Perricone gave me a private behind-the-scenes tour to see how world-renowned Murano glass is made and to see a variety of glassware: chandeliers, vases, dinnerware, jewelry, chairs, a bed frame, and glass portraits of Elton John, Freddie Mercury, Madonna, and Michael Jackson.

Burano, Italy (Photo Credit: Kwin Mosby)

Only a 15-minute boat ride away from Murano, Burano is home to several local lacemakers, including Dalla Lidia Merletti D'Arte, a family lacemaking business that's been around for more than 50 years. You can't leave Burano without a stroll around the island to look at the colorful houses. If you feel hungry, have lunch at Osteria al Museo, where you can try Burano's signature Goby fish risotto. It's delicious! When you're ready, head back to Venice via a private water taxi, approximately 20 minutes, or take the cheaper route and opt for a 45-minute public ferry ride, which only costs $8 USD.

Gelatoteca Suso (Photo Credit: Kwin Mosby)

Enjoy a Venice's Sweet Sunset
After a long day of sightseeing, reward yourself with a cone or bowl of gelato from Gelatoteca Suso. It's a local favorite. As a tourist, I can attest to it being one of the best gelato shops in Venice. Another option is Gelateria Nico, where their outdoor deck is the go-to spot for people to watch the sunset while they enjoy their sweet treat.

Other must-see places in Venice, include Doge's Palace, the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, and the Gallerie dell'Accademia, where you'll find Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man on display. There's so much to see and do. So, plan your to-do list accordingly. Summer is Italy's peak tourism season, but I suggest going off-season in September to avoid the crowds.