



VENICE

10 Mar 2016

222-2016-4

There are seven really interesting cities in the world that I would like to visit someday. They are Copenhagen, Denmark; Stockholm, Sweden; Moscow, Russia; Shanghai, China; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Sydney, Australia and Venice, Italy. In all my travels I have never been to any of these cities. I have written about Rio de Janeiro, China (the Beijing Olympics), Russia (Siberia), Australia (the Outback), Sweden and Denmark but nothing about Italy or the City of Venice. It is about time.



Where exactly is Venice?

As you can see on the map, Venice is a city in northeastern Italy. It sits on a group of small islands separated by canals and linked by bridges. It is in the marshy Venetian Lagoon which stretches along the shoreline between the mouths of the Po and the Piave Rivers on the Northern end of the Adriatic Sea. Venice is the capital of the Veneto Region where there are about 270,000 people residing of whom about 60,000 live in the historic city of Venice.

The Districts of Venice



Venice is made up of lots of small islands (islets) and canals, forming what is basically one large island. It is divided into six districts called sestieri. Around this heart lie other islands which are also part of the city, as well as Mestre which is the most populated urban area of the mainland Venice.

Cannaregio

The most northerly district of Venice, Cannaregio is the one least affected by tourism. It is a popular place to live with the locals, due to its close proximity to the mainland, which you can get to by foot, train, car, or bus via the causeway which runs out of the Santa Lucia train station.

Castello

Castello is the most easterly district on the island and full of fascinating things to see. If you're interested in Venice's naval history, then take a look around the Venetian Arsenal which is a complex of former shipyards and armories. This arsenal contains the bulk of the Venetian republic's naval power during the middle part of the second millennium AD. It was one of the earliest large-scale industrial enterprises in history. South of the docks are the public gardens where the Venice Biennale (International Art Exhibition) is held every odd-numbered year.

Dorsoduro

If you are an art lover, then this is the place to be. Across the magnificent Ponte Accademia Bridge, which links the San Marco district to Dorsoduro, is

the wonderful Accademia itself, which contains examples of mainly Venetian art from the fourteenth to eighteenth centuries.

San Polo

Located in the heart of the city, San Polo is where you will discover the legendary Rialto Bridge. Completed in 1591, it used to be the only way to cross the Grand Canal on foot until the Ponte Accademia was built in 1854.

San Croce

Santa Croce is really an extension of San Polo and lies facing Cannaregio on the opposite side of the Grand Canal. It is a popular place to live with university students and is also ideal if you are a visiting for a short time, as it is close to the city's main tourist attractions.

San Marco

This is a good place to start if you are visiting Venice for the first time. The majority of hotels, restaurants, bars and shops are situated in this bustling district as well as the main tourist attractions. Starting with the Piazza San Marco, which is the largest square in the city.

Isola Della Giudecca

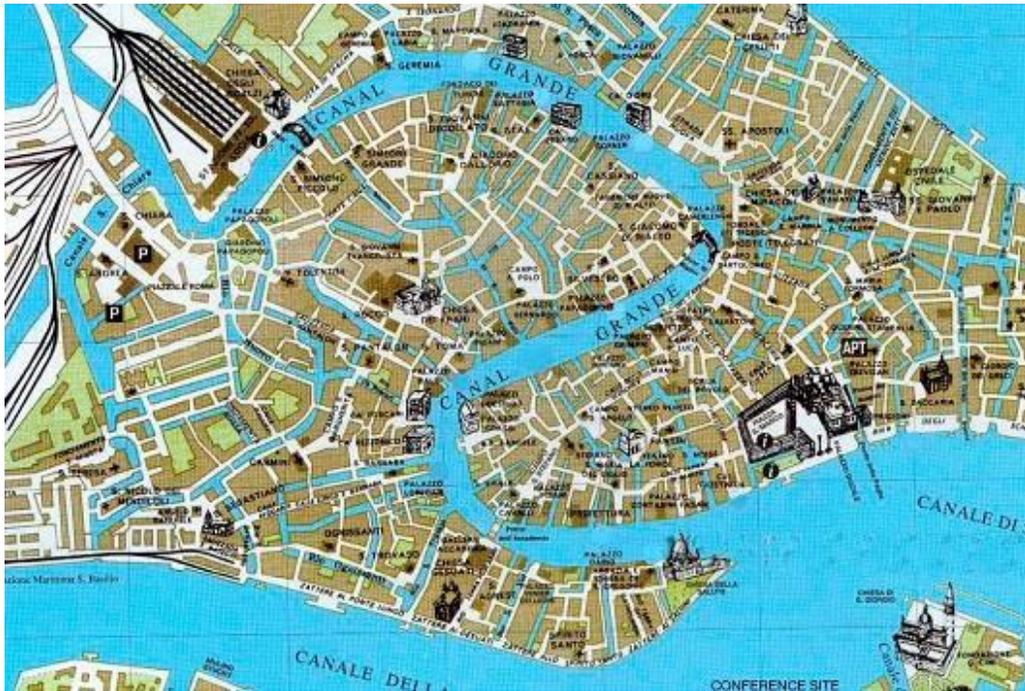
The island was originally known as Spina Longa (long spine) due to its shape. Facing the Piazzetta di San Marco, the island offers some dazzling views of Venice's mainland stretching across the 1000-foot wide Giudecca Canal.

Lido di Venezia

Home to an abundance of somewhat overcrowded beaches, this sandy, narrow island is about eight miles long and can be reached from the mainland via the car ferry or you can take one of the regular water taxis along the Grand Canal which only takes about ten minutes.

Venice Marco Polo Airport is the international airport of Venice, Italy. It is located on the mainland in the city of Tessera which is about 5 miles (8 km) from Mestre and 7.5 miles (12 km) from the train station in Venice. Due to the importance of Venice as a tourist destination, it features flights to European metropolitan areas as well as some long-haul routes to the United States and the Middle East. With 8,751,028 passengers having passed through the airport in 2015, it is the fifth busiest airport in Italy. The airport is christened after Marco Polo the famous Italian merchant traveler.

The Canals of Venice



Anyone who's been to Venice, Italy, knows that it's one of the most magical places on earth. Sitting in the Adriatic Sea like a vision, the city is a visible symbol of art, culture, and evokes the power of imagination. It simply seems to float over the sea by nature.

Of course, the city wasn't built by magic. Venice is a testament to the ingenuity of the human spirit and invention. Stone buildings of great beauty sit on the water; boats of varying sizes traverse the canals the way cars, trucks, and busses crowd the streets of more conventional cities; crowds throng the bridges and narrow pedestrian streets.

If one wants to understand the history of Venice, the best starting point is to understand the canals themselves, and how their construction and history reflects and explains the city itself.

Venice sits on a group of 118 small islands (islets) separated by 177 canals and is linked by 417 bridges. The largest canal in the city, the Grand Canal (or the "Canalasso"), is approximately 2 miles (3 km) long and wends its way in a giant "S" curve through the center of the city from the train station to the Piazza San Marco and the stunning church of Santa Maria de Salute, at which point it is over 350 feet wide. More than 170 buildings line the Grand Canal.

Four (occasionally five) bridges span the Grand Canal:

- **Ponte di Calatrava is the newest (opened in 2008) modern glass span connecting Piazzale Roma (bus terminus and parking garages) with the train station.**
- **Ponte degli Scalzi (The "barefoot bridge") connects the train station area with the Santa Croce neighborhood. The current stone version was built in 1934.**
- **Ponte di Rialto is by far the most famous and loveliest span across Venice's Grand Canal. It connects the districts of San Marco and San Polo. The present stone bridge, a single span designed by Antonio da Ponte, was completed in 1591.**



Ponte di Rialto



Ponte dell'Accademia

- Ponte dell'Accademia is a wooden walking bridge connecting the San Marco neighborhood to the Accademia Gallery in Dorsoduro. The present bridge, of identical construction to previous ones, opened in 1985.
- Temporary Votive bridge is only open for the 4-5 days surrounding the annual Festa della Salute Festival held every year on Nov 21st.

Other bridges throughout the city cross the narrower canals. Some of these are quite famous in their own right, such as the "Bridge of Sighs" at the Piazza San Marco. The steps that lead up to many of the bridges make bicycle traffic nearly impossible, so the majority of day-to-day traffic in the city takes the form of foot traffic.

This doesn't mean that there isn't plenty of traffic on the canals themselves. The canals are the main transportation route in the city, and workboats, garbage and freight barges, ambulances, and busses called "vaporettos" by the locals; there are also smaller boats called "motoscafi" that serve as taxis) that pass each other through the narrow waterways at all hours of the day.



Colorful Houses are found in many of Venice's Back Alleys



Narrow Canals Flow throughout the City of Venice

Of course, the most well-known watercrafts in Venice are the gondolas – the narrow, curiously shaped black boats that are poled through the shallow canals by gondoliers in striped shirts and wide brimmed hats. The locals, who once used the gondolas as a primary mode of transportation, leave them to the tourists these days, and anyone passing the canals becomes used to the cries of the gondoliers trying to attract business.



Most Famous Boat is the Gondolas Poled by the Gondoliers

History of Venice

When Venice was originally settled by villagers from the mainland in the 5th century, the canals were essentially the naturally occurring inlets and channels between the marshy islands of the Lagoon of Venice.



Republic of Venice Flag

The Republic of Venice was a state originating from the lagoon communities in the area of Venice, now northeastern Italy. It existed from the late 7th century AD until 1797. Although it had a long history of war and conquest, the Republic's modern reputation is chiefly based on its status as an economic and trading power.

Buildings were constructed on pilings made from closely spaced tree trunks set into the layers of sand and clay that made up the islands. As the buildings became more and more elaborately built of stone and brick, more and larger trees had to be brought from farther and farther away – many of the pilings still in use today came from Slovenia and the Alps hundreds of years ago. The canals had to be deepened and widened and lined with stone in order to accommodate the construction traffic and the commercial traffic that came with the exploding population; more canals were created as fill was added into the lagoon to create more islands for building, leading to the present maze that makes up the city.

Since the canals are the main circulatory routes of the city, a great deal of maintenance is constantly being done on them. Canals are shallow – no more than 10-15 feet deep – and are defined by spaces between the buildings that crowd their banks. They must be dredged regularly to remove the silt and sand that is deposited in the canals by the frequent high tides that flood the city.

The water that fills the canals is salt water and it is no longer clean. Since the beginning of the 20th century, the industrial waste from mainland cities has caused the canals to be polluted – the natural rhythms of the ocean can no longer handle the pollution in the water and the sediment at the bottom. Although some of the canal water looks dirty, they do not smell bad. Many plans have been created over the years to remedy the situation, but at the present time, swimming in the canals is not a good idea.

Human activity and the rerouting of rivers and streams into the lagoon have in recent years caused the city to begin sinking. The dredging of canals to maintain a useful depth is constant; many residents who could once step from their homes into a private boat to traverse the city have moved into the upper floors of their houses to avoid the frequent flooding of the canals.

Despite the continued threat to the health of Venice's canals, they remain one of the most distinctive and compelling architectural features in the world. The canals of Venice are one of Europe's top tourist attractions. A ride through the canals, whether by gondola or in a powered boat, exposes the magic of this unique city in a way that's unequalled by any other method. Travel the Canalasso at night, or explore the maze of smaller waterways during the day; the traveler is sure to come away with memories never to be erased.

Some Venice Facts and Information

Bridges and Streets of Venice

- Venice is probably the most romantic city in the world. According to Venetian tradition, the couple riding in gondola should kiss under each bridge and they will stay in love forever.
- Canals are the main communication routes, that's why main entrances in old buildings were always on the canal side. They didn't worry much about space between buildings on land, that's why Venetian streets are often narrow, sometimes weird and without logic.

- It's almost impossible to find an address in Venice. Houses in Venice are numbered according to the districts, not the streets. That is confusing even for the postmen there.

Gondolas of Venice

- One of the most recognizable symbols of Venice are the gondolas. Most people don't think about things like how they are made while enjoying their ride, but that is actually an interesting story: each gondola is made of eight different types of wood. Left side is bigger than the right one by 24 centimeters (almost a foot), and the parts of gondolas are symbols of some parts of Venice – front part represents six city zones, back part represents island of Guideka, and the central part represents the famous Rialto bridge.
- There are about 350 gondolas and about 400 gondoliers in the city of Venice.
- On average, a gondola is 36 feet (11 meters) long and it weights almost 600 kilos which equates to about 1323 pounds.
- Until recently, Venice didn't have female gondoliers. They do now - Venice got its first female gondolier in 2010.

Acqua alta

- Acqua alta or higher water happens when tide is 9 cm (3.54 inches) above normal height. It mostly happens as a result of an interaction between the warm wind blowing from north Africa and the ocean tides.
- Acqua alta is a big problem to the Venetians, but tourists usually find it interesting and picturesque.



MOSE - A system of big movable barriers to prevent flooding

- Venice is trying to fight back the acqua alta. There is a big engineering project called MOSE (MODulo Sperimentale Elettromeccanico) going on which is almost complete. It is a system of big movable barriers able to lift up when tides exceed a certain level. They hope this be the solution to the city flooding problem.

Architecture of Venice

- There are over 450 palaces (palazzi) in Venice.
- Buildings and palaces in Venice are built in a mixture of styles: Byzantine, Baroque, Gothic etc.
- There are about 7000 chimneys in Venice, built in over 10 different styles and shapes.
- The famous San Marco bell tower, or campanile, was built in the 12th century and collapsed in 1902. The tower was rebuilt to be exactly the same as the previous one. It is 323 feet (98.5 meters) tall, which makes it fifth tallest bell tower in Italy. Some say that the best view of Venice is from the top of the tower.



St. Mark's Square and the San Marco bell tower

- There are millions of wooden piles under the Venice lagoon. Venice was not built directly on the surface of the islands - buildings are supported by wooden platforms.

Carnivals and Masks of Venice

- Every year 18 million tourists visit Venice. That's an average of about 50 thousand people per day. The peak time is during the Venice Carnival with more than three million visitors every year. This year the Venice 2016 Carnival took place from January 23 - February 9.
- In 1608 the Council of Ten approved wearing masks only during the carnivals. The ones who would broke the law were heavily punished, from two years in prison to public beatings.
- There are three types of masks: bauta, moretta, and larva. Bauta usually covers face and doesn't have a mouth. Moretta is oval mask in black velvet and was worn by women of all social classes, usually during the visits to the monastery. Larva is usually white and is worn with a hat and cloak.



Carnival Masks

Depopulation of Venice

- Population of Venice decreased from over 120,000 to about 60,000 in the last 50 years.
- Some experts say that Venice could be a ghost town by 2030. It would be populated only by tourists that would come at the morning and leave in the evening, something like people do at a theme park.
- The progressive sinking of the town makes some people move out. Venice is sinking at the rate of 1.5 millimeters (.06 inches) a year.
- Maintaining old (damp) houses is very expensive.
- Many of the historic buildings in Venice have been purchased by rich foreigners.
- The high prices in Venice are forcing local citizen to move to mainland cities.

Other Facts about Venice

- There are no cars in Venice – they don't float very good!
- The sea and the lagoon around Venice is safe for swimming.
- Water from drinking fountains is safe for drinking.
- The first public casino in the world was opened in Venice in 1638.

All this information is good but I have not mentioned the most important thing yet – How is the beer?? The beer is great and it is one of the few things in Venice that is reasonably priced. A pint glass or mug of draught beer costs about 4 Euros and a bottle of beer costs about 5 Euros. I just checked and 1 Euro = \$1.09 so a pint costs \$4.36 and a bottle costs \$5.45. That might be a little higher than Honolulu prices but not bad when you consider where you are at.

There are several microbreweries or craft breweries in Venice that produce a large variety of great beers. The IL Santo Bevitore Pub is probably the best.



**IL Santo Bevitore:
Craft Beer Heaven in Venice**



**Craft Beer Pint and two popular Italy
Beers – Peroni and Birra Moretti**

So, don't you agree that Venice is a very unique and interesting city? The thing that I would worry about most is staggering out a bar at night and falling into one of those canals.

bigdrifter44@gmail.com