

The Grand Canal meanders through Venice, providing quick transportation for tourists and city dwellers.



Venice: a Day in the Floating City

Awe-inspiring sights and living history await us in this most magical of places

By Rachel Whitaker

Our first glimpse of Venice is like something from a dream, with miles of majestic buildings floating aimlessly along the city's Grand Canal and a gentle fog weaving the earth-tones of Venice life into a masterpiece Monet would be proud of. In that moment, we walk between the reality and reverie of a city unlike any other. It's a feeling we'll carry with us throughout our visit.

A View from the Water

After our initial acquaintance with the city, we're ready to embark on our first adventure: getting aboard the vaporetto

(waterbus), Venice's main mode of transportation. We spot a swaying vaporetto station several meters away, and within 30 minutes, we've purchased our passes, squeezed into the crowd onboard, and steadied our legs as the boat maneuvers its way down the center of the Grand Canal.

The Grand Canal meanders through the middle of Venice and features some of the best city views, so we decide to ride the vaporetto to the end of the line. After a few stops, we nab prime seats in the boat's bow and take in some of the city's most impressive landmarks, including

the 400-year-old Rialto Bridge, the Doge's Palace in St. Mark's Square, and the Salute Basilica.

As the vaporetto speeds along, we also get a feel for the city's uber-condensed layout. Every few meters, packed buildings make way for narrow canals, providing a glimpse straight down into the heart of the city. Just as quickly, the view is gone.

The City Maze

After the vaporetto tour, we set off on foot in search of St. Mark's Square. The city soon swallows us up, replacing the



The Salute Basilica captures the elegance and grandeur of Venetian architecture.



Hitch a ride on a gondola for a once-in-a-lifetime experience.



The famous Rialto Bridge spans the Grand Canal and is a prime spot for picture taking.



Enter the city to find a maze of streets lined with shops, cafes, and the occasional square.

vast openness of the Grand Canal with a complex maze of cramped streets, canals, footbridges, and stories-high buildings. In no time, we're completely turned around and take out our maps for help. Even the simplest route from Point A to Point B can be tricky in the city, and as we move from alleyway to alleyway, we feel an unsettling dependence upon the diagrams in our hands. No matter. It's all part of the fun and quirkiness of Venice.

St. Mark's Square

When we finally find our way to St. Mark's Square, we're greeted by a huge plaza full of people, pigeons, music, and famous architectural wonders. The centuries-old Doge's Palace, Correr Museum, and St. Mark's Basilica beckon to us from opposing sides, and we waste no time exploring their rich history up close and personal, inside and out. A guided tour of these buildings makes the experience even more interesting and memorable.

Treasure Shopping

After St. Marks, we re-enter the maze, paying more attention to the scenery as we wander. It doesn't take long to realize that getting a little lost in Venice can be a welcome experience. Nearly every street we walk down is lined with enticing shops, stands, and cafes. Shoes, purses, scarves, jewelry—it's a fashion lover's paradise full of opportunities to bring Venice home (even for a steal). We also find a variety of shops filled with authentic treasures: beautiful masquerade masks, homemade paper, wax seals, statuettes, paintings, and more.

All that walking is tiring after awhile, so we stop at a café for a slice of pizza, then follow it up with an assortment of shortbread pastries and chocolate from a nearby pastry shop. The rich European sweetness in our mouths adds one more layer of delight to our exploration.

Fine Dining

As we saunter through another square a few hours later, we're once again tempted by the alluring aroma of Venetian cuisine. The setting sun and the shadows playing across the square seem to imply that fine dining is in order, so we look around for a restaurant that suits our fancy. Red colored umbrellas, crisply pressed tablecloths and a dashing Venetian violinist catch our eye, and we take a peek at the outside menu before finding a seat in the restaurant's outdoor veranda. A waiter is soon at our side, offering crackling bread, fresh seafood, and pasta dripping in sauce—all to our heart's content.

With brimming shopping bags, sore feet, full stomachs, and cool drinks in our hands, we sit back and enjoy our last moments of the dream that is Venice. Its unmatched beauty, rich history, and bustling city life create a unique atmosphere that will live in our memories long after we depart.



Rachel Whitaker is the owner and principal copywriter of Rachel Whitaker Creative (www.rachelwhitaker.com), a writing and editing company serving businesses across the US. She is fueled by her enthusiasm for life, family, and a long list of hobbies, including travel, great books, fiction writing, and outdoor recreation.