



Venice at Christmas

with Vicenza and Bassano del Grappa

21–28 December 2026 (MM 247)

8 days

Speaker: Dr Susan Steer

Celebrate the splendours of *La Serenissima* and jewels of the mainland at a festive but less busy time of year.

Private after-hours visit to St Mark's Basilica to view the remarkable Byzantine mosaics without the crowds.

Includes the classic and the less well-known sites of Venice, with excursions to the exquisite towns of Vicenza and Bassano del Grappa.

Wide-ranging variety of art and architecture with a particular emphasis on the Renaissance.

There are not half-a-dozen cities in the world that surpass Venice for the sheer number of major works of architecture, sculpture and painting. Yet the world's most beautiful city had an inauspicious start. The site was once merely a collection of mudbanks, and the first settlers came as refugees fleeing the barbarian destroyers of the Roman Empire. They sought to escape to terrain so inhospitable that no foe would follow.

The success of the community that arose on the site would have been beyond the wildest imaginings of the first Venetians. By the end of the Middle Ages Venice had become the leading maritime power in the Mediterranean and possibly the wealthiest city in Europe. The shallow waters of the lagoon had indeed kept it safe from malign incursions and it kept its independence until the end of the 18th century. 'Once did she hold the gorgeous East in fee, and was the safeguard of the West, Venice, eldest child of liberty.'

Trade with the East was the source of that wealth and power, and the eastern connection has left its indelible stamp upon Venetian art and architecture. Western styles are here tempered by a richness of effect and delicacy of pattern redolent of oriental opulence. It is above all by its colour that Venetian painting is distinguished. And whether sonorous or poetic, from Bellini through Titian to Tiepolo, there remain echoes of the transcendental splendour of the Byzantine mosaics of St Mark's.

That Venice survives so comprehensively from the days of its greatness, so little ruffled by modern intrusions, would suffice to make it the goal of everyone who is curious about the man-made world. Thoroughfares being water



Venice, colour Ducal Palace,

and cars nonexistent, the imagination traverses the centuries with ease.

Itinerary

Day 1. Fly at c. 10.00am (British Airways) from London Heathrow to Venice. Cross the lagoon by *motoscafo* (water-taxi) to the hotel.

Day 2. In the morning visit the incomparably beautiful Doge's Palace with pink Gothic revetment and rich Renaissance interiors. In the afternoon, see the beautiful Biblioteca Marciana, in Piazzetta S. Marco, which was begun in 1536 by Sansovino and finished by Scamozzi in 1591.

Day 3. Vicenza. A first excursion to the mainland. Walk through the city centre to Santa Corona, then visit the epoch-making theatre (Teatro Olimpico) and Palazzo Chiericati which houses an excellent art gallery. After lunch, visit Villa Valmarana 'ai Nani' with superb frescoes by Giambattista Tiepolo and his son.

Day 4. In the morning visit the Fondazione Querini Stampaglia, a cultural institution, museum, and public library; here architect Carlo Scarpa redesigned the 16th-century spaces between 1949–61. Nearby is the church of S. Maria dei Miracoli, a masterpiece of the early Renaissance.

Day 5. Christmas Day. A free morning, opportunity perhaps to attend a service in S. Marco or the English church. Before lunch see the palaces on the Grand Canal from the most Venetian of vantage-points, a gondola.

Day 6: Bassano. A day trip to Bassano del Grappa, a highly attractive hill town with a series of picturesque squares and painted façades and a wooden bridge designed by Palladio. Home of the Bassano family of painters, there is a major holding of their works in the excellent civic museum. Lunch is followed by a grappa tasting.

Day 7. Spend the morning in the Accademia, Venice's major art gallery, where all the Venetian painters are well represented. The Scuola Grande dei Carmini has paintings by Tiepolo. The San Polo district is the location of the great Franciscan church of S. Maria Gloriosa dei Frari which has outstanding artworks including Titian's Assumption, and the Scuola Grande di S. Rocco, with dramatic paintings by Tintoretto. In the evening there is a special after-hours private visit to the Basilica of S. Marco, an 11th-century Byzantine church enriched over the centuries with mosaics, sculpture and various precious objects.

Day 8. The Ca' Rezzonico, a magnificent palace on the Grand Canal, is now a museum of 18th-century art. Travel by *motoscafo* to Venice airport and fly back to London Heathrow, arriving c.4.00pm

Venice at Christmas continued

Lecturer

Dr Susan Steer. Art historian specialising in Venice. Her MA concentrated on the city's art and architecture and her PhD on Venetian Renaissance altarpieces. As post-doctoral researcher with the University of Glasgow and Neil MacGregor scholar at the National Gallery, she worked as a researcher and editor on the National Inventory of European Painting, the UK's online catalogue of European paintings. She has extensive experience of teaching History of Art for university programmes in the UK and Italy. Susan taught for the University of Warwick in Venice and is now the Venice representative for the Venice in Peril Fund, the British charity which MRT supports.

Venice in Peril. Venice in Peril Fund is the leading British charity dedicated to safeguarding the rich cultural heritage of Venice, now and for future generations. Through collaborative conservation projects, research, educational training and our events programme, we support conservation efforts across Venice, its lagoon and historical territories. Recent MRT donations (included in the price of the tour) have gone directly to supporting the restoration of Carlo Scarpa's watergate at the Querini Stampalia Foundation. www.veniceinperil.org



Practicalities

Price, per person. Two sharing: £5,130 or £4,860 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £6,110 or £5,840 without flights.

Price, per person. Two sharing: A\$10,780 or A\$10,210 without flights. **Single occupancy:** A\$12,840 or A\$12,270 without flights.

Price, per person. Two sharing: US\$6,890 or US\$6,530 without flights. **Single occupancy:** US\$8,210 or US\$7,850 without flights.

Included: travel between Venice Airport and hotel by private water-taxi, some journeys by *vaporetto* and one by gondola; accommodation as described below; breakfasts, 2 lunches and 4 dinners with wine, water, coffee; all admissions; all tips for waiters, porters; all taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

Accommodation. Hotel Luna Baglioni (venice.baglionihotels.com): A luxurious 5* hotel that showcases Venetian splendour. The location is very central, minutes away from Piazza San Marco and the Royal Gardens but removed from the main thoroughfare. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use, canal view rooms are available on request and for a supplement.*

How strenuous? The nature of Venice means that the city is more often than not traversed on foot. Although part of her charm, there is a lot of walking and crossing of bridges; standing around in museums and palaces is also unavoidable. This tour should not be undertaken by anyone who has difficulties with everyday walking and stairclimbing.

Group size: between 8 and 18 participants.