



Essential Venice

All the unmissable splendours of La Serenissima

14–19 March 2026 (MM 898)

£3,170 • 6 days

Speaker: Dr Susan Steer

The varied joys of Venice, led by an art historian and one-time resident.

Little visited quarters as well as better known, history as well as art, present as well as past.

Includes a private after-hours visit to St Mark's to see the splendid mosaics illuminated.

The most Serene Republic of Venice grew in power, status and territory for over a millennium, until Napoleon forced it to dissolve itself in 1797. But the political and social turmoil that ensued did not prevent artists, writers and musicians from continuing to flock to this most alluring and inspiring of cities, nor dent its appeal as the climactic destination for any European 'Grand Tour'.

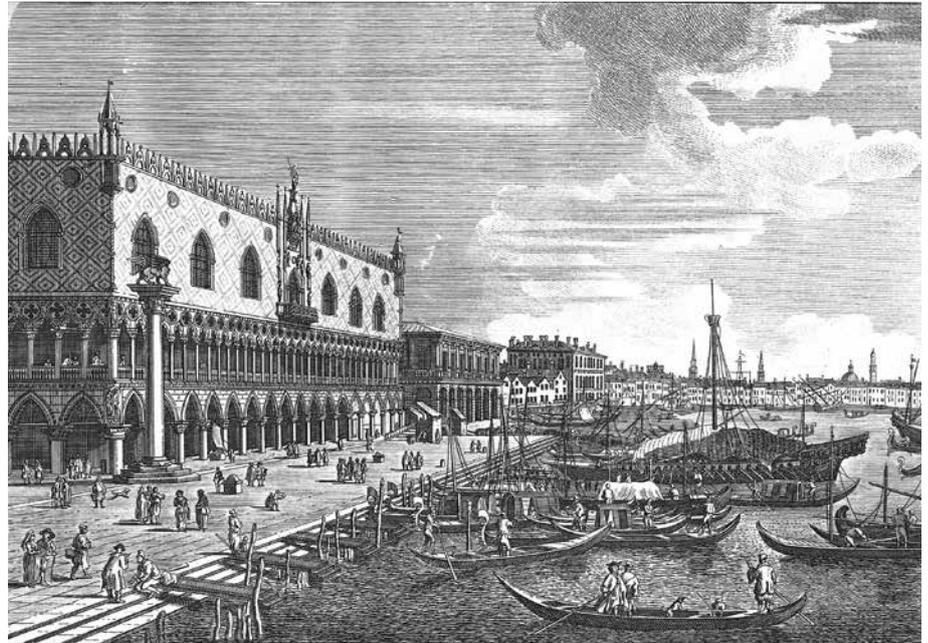
More recently, Venice has maintained a fiercely contemporary art scene. The Venice Biennale, Architecture Biennale and the Venice International Film Festival are among the hottest events in the global cultural calendar.

The city is divided into six *sestieri*, or neighbourhoods, each with its own character and history: San Marco, San Polo, Dorsoduro, Cannaregio, Castello and Santa Croce (now home to the main transport hubs and the only one not visited on this tour). It is through the lens of these distinct districts that our story of Venice is told.

San Marco is at the heart of the city, both geographically and historically. The Palazzo Ducale was the political and administrative centre of *La Serenissima*, where the Doge and the complex system of councils governed the expanding territories of the Venetian Republic. Their influence extended to the other seat of power, the Patriarchate of Venice in St Mark's Basilica, where Venice was kept ideologically independent from the Vatican.

The *sestiere* of San Polo, across the Grand Canal, is home to ancient markets and many magnificent churches. Dorsoduro is very different in ambience, the streets quieter as tourists dissipate and the peaceful canals evoke a slower pace of Italian life. But it is also a thriving university district and home to significant art collections.

Finally, Castello and Cannaregio, the two largest areas. Being relatively less visited does not mean there is a shortage of splendour or historical significance: the shipyards of



Venice, Perspective from St Mark's Pillar to Dalmatian Wharf

the Arsenale underpinned Venice's naval supremacy; while the Ghetto, to which Jews were confined by the Doge in 1516, remains the heart of Jewish life in the city.

Itinerary

Day 1. Fly at c. 1.30pm (British Airways) from London Heathrow to Venice. From the airport a *motoscafo* (water-taxi) takes you across the lagoon and through canals to your hotel.

Day 2: San Marco. An introductory walk around the incomparable Piazza San Marco is followed by the Doge's Palace, beautiful in its pink Gothic revetment and containing rich Renaissance interiors. In the afternoon, see the *palazzi* on the Grand Canal from the viewpoint of a gondola. In the evening there is a special after-hours private visit to the Basilica di San Marco, an 11th-century Byzantine church enriched over the centuries with mosaics, sculpture and various precious objects.

Day 3: Dorsoduro, Giudecca. Start with a visit to Sta. Maria della Salute, the splendid Baroque church at the mouth of the Grand Canal, built in thanksgiving for deliverance from the 1630 plague. The Accademia is the major art gallery in Venice, where all the Venetian painters are represented. The afternoon is spent on the Giudecca, the southernmost and

most tranquil of the islands. Here and on the neighboring island of San Giorgio are Palladio's two great churches, S. Giorgio Maggiore and Il Redentore.

Day 4: San Polo. San Polo is the location of Sta. Maria Gloriosa dei Frari and the Scuola Grande di San Rocco. The first is the great Franciscan church which houses artworks such as Titian's *Assumption* and Canova's tomb; the second is adorned with a magnificent cycle of dramatic paintings by Tintoretto. The afternoon is free.

Day 5: Castello, Cannaregio. An Early Renaissance morning: the church of San Zaccaria is the architectural masterpiece of the era and houses an outstanding altarpiece by Bellini, while the Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni houses the wonderfully engaging cycle of paintings by Carpaccio. To the *sestiere* of Cannaregio in the afternoon to explore the centuries-old presence and impact of Judaism in Venice, with a tour of the Jewish Ghetto and its synagogues.

Day 6. Dorsoduro. Two palaces on the Grand Canal provide very different experiences – the museum of the 18th century in the Ca' Rezzonico and the Peggy Guggenheim collection of 20th-century art. After lunchtime travel by *motoscafo* to Venice airport. The flight arrives at London Heathrow at c. 7.15pm.

Essential Venice
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 teaches for the University of Warwick in Venice and is the Venice representative for the Venice in Peril Fund.

Practicalities

Price. Two sharing: £3,170 or £2,960 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £3,690 or £3,480 without flights.

Included: flights (Euro Traveller) with British Airways (Airbus 320); travel between Venice Airport and hotel by water-taxi, a *vaporetto* pass for the duration of the tour; luggage portage from and to the airport; hotel accommodation; breakfasts and 3 dinners with wine, water, coffee; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

Accommodation. Hotel Splendid, Venice (starhotels.com): delightful 4-star hotel situated half-way between Piazza San Marco and the Rialto bridge. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use.*

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 along the flat and up and down bridges; standing around in museums and churches is also unavoidable. The tour should not be attempted by anyone who has difficulty with everyday walking and stair-climbing.

Group size: between 8 and 18 participants.