

## Venice Sightseeing

### Accademia Bridge

Accademia Bridge was created in 1854 across the Grand Canal to lessen the load on the Rialto. The bridge boasts of a 24-foot arch, so that galleys can pass through it. It has three walkways, with two on the outer balustrades, and a third, wider one at the central walkway where you can pass through to get to the various shops. The bridge is made up mostly of steps, so people with strollers or on wheelchairs may have a hard time traversing this bridge.



### Basilica di San Marco

The Basilica's bell tower, also known as the Campanile di San Marco, can be reached by an elevator ride inside the church. It is the highest structure in all of Venice, towering at 97 meters and bestows a spectacular view.

The bell tower was originally built during the 9th century, but was rebuilt during the 12th, 14th, and 16th centuries, when Jacopo Sansovino added the marble loggia at its base. The tower collapsed in 1902 for unknown reasons, but thankfully, no one was hurt. The people of Venice rebuilt it as it used to be, using the materials from the fallen tower itself. One of the five historical bells was also spared from the crash, and is still in use today. The tower reopened in April 25, 1912 on Saint Mark's Day, 1,000 years after the original foundations were laid.



### **Basilica of San Pietro di Castello**

One of the most ominous structures on the island is the Basilica of San Pietro di Castello. The island used to be named Olivolo, and served as the first community of the city of Venice. This was where the religious, political, and commercial hubs were located. The first structure that was created was made in the honour of Sergio and Bacchus, and the newer version of the church was then dedicated to St. Peter the Apostle.

The church has undergone numerous restorations and renovations throughout the years since it was built. The façade was done by Andrea Smeraldi, who continued the work of Andrea Palladio, who worked on the façade in 1556. The basilica used to be called the Cathedral of Venice until 1807, when the name was changed to the Basilica of St. Mark.

One of the basilica's major features is none other than its bell tower, made of Istria stone by Mauro Codussi from 1482 to 1488. The floor plan of the church resembles that of a Latin cross. It has a single nave that is capped by a deep chancel, and two aisles with their own side chapels.

### **Grand Canal**

Venice's most famous and vital waterway, the Grand Canal is "the finest street in the world, with the finest houses", as described by a French writer in the 15th century. Its banks are lined with an amazing array of beautiful buildings, including over 100 palaces (palazzo) dating from the 12th to 18th centuries, as well as the Palazzo Venier dei Leoni, housing the Peggy Guggenheim Collection.

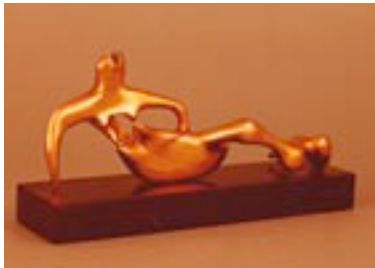
The canal curves some 3.5 kilometres through the city, starting at the lagoon at the train station and ending at the Basilica di Santa

Maria della Salute, just before merging with the Canal of San Marco at Piazza San Marco (Saint Mark's Square). Visit this website for further information about [La Salute \(or Santa Maria Della statue\)](#)

You can hop on the *vaporetto* (water taxi) No. 1 at Piazzale Roma to tour the canal, or hire a private gondola.

### **Museum of 18th Century Venice**

This museum recreates the opulence and decadence of a baroque Venetian palazzo in the 1700's. The palazzo, called Ca' Rezzonico, is on the Grand Canal. You'll see lavish period furnishings, a grand ballroom, chandeliers, frescoes, and paintings from the ostentatious period.



### **Peggy Guggenheim Collection**

Assembled by the American expatriate Peggy Guggenheim, it is considered to be one of the most comprehensive collections of modern European and American art in the world. It is located in Peggy Guggenheim's former home, Palazzo Venier dei Leoni, on the Grand Canal in Venice. With rooms containing works by some of the most recognized modern artists: Giacometti, Brancusi, Dalí, Léger, Mondrian, Chagall, Ernst and Miró, you can easily spend several hours feasting your eyes. Tel +39.041.2405411, web address: [info@guggenheim-venice.it](mailto:info@guggenheim-venice.it)



### **Ponte di Rialto**

The elegant stone Ponte di Rialto is probably the most popular bridge in Venice, as it used to be the only means of crossing the Grand Canal without the use of a boat. Due to its location a commercial centre was built around it. To this day the bridge is surrounded by markets, while shops can be found on the bridge itself.

The Rialto was originally built with wood instead of stone, but because of this, the bridge collapsed several times, so the city decided to build a new Rialto made of stone. Venetians were asked to participate in a contest vying for the best bridge design, and Antonio da Ponte won out over famous artists like Michaelangelo and Palladio.



### **Piazza San Marco (St Mark's Square)**

Declared the "drawing room of the world" by Musset, Piazza San Marco, or St. Mark's square is probably the best place to sit and enjoy a nice afternoon in Venice. Here you will find flocks of pigeons waiting for their maize, outdoor cafes that line the square's perimeter, as well as the historic buildings that border the square.

It has borne witness to the most significant religious and political

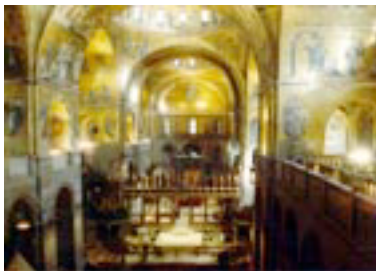
events of Venice. For almost a millennium, this square has been the centre of social life in Venice.

The square's shape was established during the 12th century, made in honour of the meeting of Pope Alexander III and Emperor Barbarossa. For the said meeting, Rio Batario, a canal that used to dissect the Square, was filled in. A new, smaller square was also built with the columns of San Marco and San Todaro, Venice's patron saints.

### **San Pietro di Castello**

The San Pietro di Castello is actually an island, located in Venice. You can visit this island by going through any one of the two bridges from mainland Venice. It was named castello because the island used to be the home of a sixth-century castle, which was turned into the seat of the Bishop of Venice when the seventh century rolled around.

### **Top Things to Do**



### **Visit the Basilica Di San Marco**

Don't miss seeing the fascinating Basilica Di San Marco an opulent synthesis of Byzantine and Romanesque styles, Venice's gem. The original church was built in 828 to house the body of St. Mark the Evangelist. A 976 fire destroyed most of the original church which was rebuilt and reopened in 1094, and for centuries it would serve as a symbol of Venetian wealth and power.

Famous for its 43,055 square feet of stunning mosaics, it's a spectacle not to be missed.

### **Tip**

If you want a free guided tour in English during summer months

(less certain in winter, as the guides are volunteers), look for groups forming on the porch inside the main door. You may also arrange tours by appointment.

### **Note**

As everywhere in Italy where religious buildings are concerned, you will be turned away if you have bare shoulders or knees.



### **Wander around the Ca' d'Oro**

This exquisite Venetian Gothic palace was once literally a "Golden House," when its marble traceries and ornaments were embellished with pure gold. Created in 1434 by the patrician Marino Contarini for his wife, Ca' d'Oro became a love offering. It was offered in similar fashion a second time when a 19th-century Russian prince gave it to Maria Taglioni, a celebrated classical dancer who collected palaces along the Grand Canal. The last proprietor, perhaps more taken with Venice than with any of his lovers, left Ca' d'Oro to the city. He had it carefully restored and filled with antiquities, sculptures, and paintings that today make up the Galleria Franchetti.



### **Go on a Gondola ride**

Hard to avoid, this is a highlight for many who visit. On a Gondola, you can take a romantic float down one of the most photographed places in the world. Visit this website for further

information about [Gondolas](#).

### **Visit the Guggenheim**

The Peggy Guggenheim Collection is arguably the most important museum in Italy for European and American art. It is located in Peggy Guggenheim's former home, Palazzo Venier dei Leoni, on the Grand Canal in Venice. The museum was inaugurated in 1980 and it presents Peggy Guggenheim's personal collection of 20th century art, masterpieces from the Gianni Mattioli Collection, the Nasher Sculpture Garden, as well as temporary exhibitions.

Tel +39.041.2405411, web address: [info@guggenheim-venice.it](mailto:info@guggenheim-venice.it)

### **Visit a Museum**

Step back in time at Ca' Rezzonico. English critic John Ruskin (1819-1900) may have called this "the silliest palace" on the Grand Canal, but today a visit to its Museo del Settecento Veneziano (Museum of 18th-Century Venice) provides a fascinating peek into the lives of Venetian nobles and commoners of a bygone era that deserves all visitors notice. If you visit the Ca' Rezzonico, you will find eleven rooms containing paintings, sculptures, frescoed ceilings and collections of eighteenth-century furnishings. The Academia Museum exhibits works by Titian, Bellini, Carpaccio, Mantegna, Piero della Francesca, Giorgione, Veronese, Tintoretto, Tiepolo, Canaletto, and many others and is absolutely a must see when visiting Venice.



### **Check out the Palazzo Ducale or Doge's Palace**

Rising above the Piazzetta San Marco, this Gothic-Renaissance fantasia of pink-and-white marble is a majestic expression of the prosperity and power attained during Venice's most glorious

period. Some architectural purists find the building top-heavy, its hulking upper floors resting upon a graceful ground-floor colonnade, but one can hardly imagine the palace with any other design. Always much more than a residence, it was White House, Senate, torture chamber, and prison rolled into one. Don't miss it.

### **Visit the Querini-Stamalia**

The art collection at this Renaissance palace includes Giovanni Bellini's Presentation in the Temple and Sebastiano Ricci's triptych Dawn, Afternoon, and Evening. Original 18th-century furniture and stucco work are a fitting background for Pietro Longhi's portraits, also hanging here plus nearly 70 works of Venetian street life by Gabriele Bella (1730-99).

### **Enjoy the View from the Rialto Bridge**

Nearly all the bridges in Venice are interesting, but the most popular by far is the stunning Rialto Bridge. The competition to design a stone bridge across the Grand Canal (replacing earlier wooden versions) attracted the late 1500s' best architects, including Michelangelo, Palladio, and Sansovino, but the job went to the less famous Antonio da Ponte. His pragmatic design featured shop space and was high enough for galleys to pass beneath. Along the railing you'll enjoy one of the city's most famous views: the Grand Canal vibrant with boat traffic.



### **Enjoy a quiet moment at Santi Giovanni Paolo**

This massive Dominican church, commonly called San Zanipolo, contains a wealth of art. The 15th-century stained-glass window

near the side entrance is breathtaking for its brilliant colours and beautiful figures, made from drawings by Bartolomeo Vivarini and Gerolamo Mocetto. The second official church of the Republic after San Marco, San Zanipolo is the Venetian equivalent of London's Westminster Abbey, with a great number of important people, including 25 doges, buried here.

### **See and be seen**

Sit in one of the canal-side café's, sip a glass of local wine, dine on olives and cheese and go people watching. This is a very Venetian pastime, (in fact, it's an Italian pastime) and gives you time to rest your weary feet and absorb Venice on a gentler level. After all the sightseeing you'll be doing on foot (or by sea) you'll need to take time out.