

Venice

Gondolas, bridges, lagoons – oh the incomparably beautiful “Queen of Adriatic”.

They don't call Venice the “City of Water” for nothing, you can forget about wheels here. Venice is arguably the best city to wander aimlessly both from the waterfront and on foot. This musical hometown of Vivaldi is also a heaven for photographers with each corner being a scene to capture. It's true that Venice suffers from a constant tourist-boom and is, hence, expensive. Yet, most of the authentic things to spot in Venice do not stand under the spotlight. They are, in fact, surprisingly, free: typical scenes of fresh sheets hanging on ropes stretched from window to window, a cat napping under the shades of a *sartoria* (tailor shop), an aspiring artist painting upon a *passerella* (footbridge), or some MET's chefs having their smoke break in the back alleyway.

Richly lined with the Venetian Gothic style with its typical lancet windows, Renaissance, Baroque, elegant façade and interior of old churches, you'll find it hard not to sigh in admiration while walking along the charming Grand Canal. Venice, or *La Serenissima* (The Most Serene One), while no longer fully true to its name, is still a center of art, culture, inspiration, and indescribable beauty. Biennale or not, Venice is packed with tourists. Even during summer when the Venetian canals go through their puberty smell or between autumn and spring when *Acqua Alta* (high water) occasionally turns the city's lowest point St. Mark's Square into “St. Mark's Pond”, this 270,000 inhabitant city still attracts over 20 million tourists each year. There's only a tiny chance of having your individual photo with the background of the Bridge of Sighs without looking like being in a tour group photo.

Thou shalt not fret! It's not until you finally “break up” with the touristy San Marco and wander throughout the *sestieri* (districts) that you discover the true *serenità* of Venice. From San Marco, cross the Accademia Bridge to get to the sleepy charming area of Dorsoduro, where you can come across the Salute church and the famous Frari. The peaceful long thin island of Giudecca is easily reached by vaporetto from San Marco to the stop Redentore or Palanca. While you're there, sit on the balcony of Altanella in Calle delle Erbe overlooking the canal and indulge in their fresh yummy seafood. Shop for clothes and other goods in the low-key *sestiere* of Cannaregio, where you might also bump into some really cool old synagogues. The less crowded Santa Croce is also perfect for lazing the day away, visit some art at the Ca' d'Oro and then chat over some Spritz at Ai Postali, a canalside café where locals “park” their boats and squeeze in for a drink, find as well some of the University's oldest faculties and the Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista in the area. In Castello, picnic at the Arsenale, admire the Venetian Gothic styled San Giovanni e Paolo church with the stunning interior of Chapel of the Rosary in it, then taste the heavenly hot chocolate with *zalletti* biscuits at Rosa Salva or wander freely in the maze of tiny *calli* (streets).