

A Brief History of Venice

Venice is a city that spreads across 118 small islands in a bay called the Venetian Lagoon lying between the Po and Piave rivers. The islands of Venice are separated by canals and brought together again by 400 different bridges. This romantic city on water has kept the same look for hundreds of years, which makes it one of the most attractive tourist destinations in the world.

For 1,100 years between 697 and 1797, Venice was ruled by the Doge of Venice. The Doge ruled Venice for life and was elected by the royals and the rich. It was typically the wisest elder in town. During this period, Venice developed into a city-state which was called the Most Serene Republic of Venice. It was a major trading power in Europe, and it also acquired territories along the Adriatic Sea.

Today, Venice is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world. In fact, in peak periods, there are too many tourists for such a small town which causes erosion and pollution problems.

Doge's Palace



Today, the Doge's Palace operates as a museum, but for a thousand years before, it was the place where the rulers of Venice, the Doges, lived. Originally built in the 9th century when the seat of the government of Venice was moved from the Malamocco Island, the initial building was destroyed in a fire, so there are no remains of it.

Over the years, the palace was reconstructed and expanded, either upon personal wishes of the Doge or a fire. The complex consists of the palace and a spacious courtyard overlooking the lagoon.

In the palace, there is the Doge's apartment with different, beautifully decorated rooms, valuable art, and jewelry. Other rooms were used for political purposes during the republic. The Doge's Palace was also used as a prison for many years, although some prisoners successfully managed to escape.



Saint Mark's Basilica

Another important sight on the Saint Mark's Square is the Basilica. This church originates from the 9th century; yet, the present basilica was only constructed later in the 11th and 12th century. In these first several centuries, the church operated as a

private chapel of the Doge.

From the 13th century onward, the basilica became a state church where many great public ceremonies were held, including the burials of the Doges. The interior of the church is inspired by an Orthodox church in Istanbul, and the walls are covered in mosaics made of gold. For this reason, the basilica is also known as Chiesa d'Oro (Church of Gold).

On the outside, there are famous Horses of Saint Mark, statues which were installed in 1254. Napoleon took them to Paris when he defeated Venice in 1797, but they were returned shortly after.



Gondolas

Perhaps the most special objects in Venice are gondolas, traditional rowing boats perfectly suited for the narrow canals of Venice. At the time Venice was a city-state, the gondola was the main means of

transportation.

Nowadays, they are still a convenient form of public transportation; however, they are mostly there for the curious tourists. In the 17th and 18th century, up to ten thousand gondolas were present on the canals.

They are now restricted to a set number of licensed (permitted) boats (some 400 of them). An old law in Venice ordered that all gondolas should be painted black, so even today they will lack any other colour.



An Authentic Dish of Venice

For a perfect dinner in Venice, starts with *cicchetti*, a collection of small snacks. They typically include small sandwiches, olives, and small servings of meat and seafood. The trademark main course is cuttlefish. It is served in cuttlefish's black ink (a dark liquid released by the fish) as a sauce, together with polenta (corn flour),

risotto (a kind of rice dish), or pasta.