

ITALIAN JOURNEYS

4400 Cold Springs Road, Winston-Salem, NC 27106

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Italian Journeys: Venice and the Veneto

April 5 to 15, 2011

As the Roman Empire crumbled and lawless barbarians swept into Italy, a group of refugees sought safety on the swampy islands of a brackish lagoon. In the year 697 AD they formed a central government and elected their first doge, thereby establishing a republic that would endure with remarkable determination for over a thousand years. Physically, financially, politically, and psychically separate from mainland Italy, Venice has always been a city unto itself. The art, the architecture, the food, even the accents, are unique to this little clutch of islands.

Fiercely independent, even to the point of ignoring Papal edicts, the Venetians nevertheless have always needed a foothold on the mainland, if only for planting their crops. Hence the importance of the Veneto, the land that wraps around Venice like a backdoor kitchen garden. For centuries these rich flat farmlands have provided food for Venetians' tables and retreats for Venetian lords. And it goes without saying that in order to preside over your land, you will need a comfortable villa. Here is where Andrea Palladio comes in. Born in 1508, Palladio, who worked almost exclusively in Venice and the Veneto, has had perhaps more influence on Western-style building than any single architect in the history of our civilization. We are including a rich sampling of his villas on the trip, along with several of his palaces and two of his churches. It makes for a thrilling sweep.

Thus on this trip we look forward to exploring both the floating city and its agrarian counterpart: Venice and the Veneto.

April 5, Tuesday

We meet at our hotel in the town of Mira, a short distance from Venice's Marco Polo airport. In the late afternoon we will begin our exploration of the works of 16th century architect Andrea Palladio with a visit to the Villa Malcontenta, an imposing villa perched on a bend in the Brenta Canal. We will have a welcome dinner at a favorite restaurant before retiring to our hotel, which, like the Malcontenta, is a villa on the Brenta Canal. (Hotel Villa Margherita, Mira, dinner)

April 6, Wednesday

The highlight of today's visit to Padua will certainly be the Scrovegni Chapel with its fabulous fresco cycle by Giotto. Here we find the most complete work by this Early Renaissance artist and certainly one of the great masterpieces of Western art. In addition to Giotto's chapel, Padua offers many other enticing attractions: the pilgrim shrine to St. Anthony in the Basilica by that name, the bustling market in the Piazza delle Herbe, and Il Bo, the university where Galileo lectured on astronomy and astrology (!) as well as the site of Europe's first anatomical theater. There will be free time in Padua for lunch. (Mira; dinner)

April 7 Thursday

A morning of gardens: The Villa Emo, a private villa in Rivella with beautiful formal gardens, (this is not Palladio's Villa Emo, which we visit later on the trip) and the Villa Barbarigo in Valsanzibio with towering hedges, water follies, and a twelve-foot high maze. We will have lunch at a country inn and in the afternoon visit Palladio's Villa Poiano, which has only recently opened to the public. I'm looking forward to this. The Villa Poiano has been on my wish list for

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years. We finish out the day in Vicenza, the hometown of Palladio, and, not surprisingly, one of the loveliest of Italian cities. In the late afternoon, we can look forward to a stroll along the Corso Palladio, a street lined with Renaissance palaces, and to soaking up atmosphere in the Piazza Signori certainly one of Italy's most pleasing piazzas. (Hotel Palladio, Vicenza, lunch)

April 8, Friday

We begin the morning at the top of Monte Berico. Hikers can arrive by foot. The site offers splendid views of the region and the basilica has an impressive Last Supper by Veronese, an artist we will encounter again on this trip. From Monte Berico, it is a pleasant walk to two wonderful villas: Palladio's stately Villa Rotonda, one of the great buildings of the world, and the delightful Villa Valmarana with frescoes throughout by the Tiepolo's—father and son. The Villa is familiarly known as "ai Nani" on account of the stone dwarves decorating the garden walls. In the afternoon we will visit Palladio's Teatro Olimpico, one of the first indoor theaters in Europe, along with other works by this favorite son of the city. Lunch is free. (Vicenza, dinner)

April 9, Saturday

Leaving Vicenza, we will catch one more Palladian villa, the Villa Caldogno, another that has only recently opened to the public. We continue to Possagno, the birthplace of Neo-Classical sculptor Antonio Canova. His Gypsoteca, or museum of plaster casts, provides wonderful insight into the methods of sculpture and the career of this very important 18th century artist. We will stop long enough in Bassano del Grappa to admire Palladio's famous covered bridge and allow time for everyone to find a quick lunch. Then on to Asolo where first we hope to visit the wonderful silk factory where silks are woven on centuries' old wooden looms. We will arrive in Asolo early enough to enjoy this hilltown's splendid setting as well as our lovely hotel. Asolo throughout time has been known for its serene beauty. During the Renaissance, the city was ruled by Queen Catherine Cornaro. In the 19th century, Elizabeth and Robert Browning rented a villa in Asolo where they spent some of the happiest days of their lives. (Villa Cipriani, Asolo, dinner)

April 10, Sunday

Early risers will want to catch the antiques market in Asolo's central piazza. Later in the morning we will visit the Brion Cemetery, the work of twentieth century architect Carlo Scarpa and a favorite artist of Italian Journeys. Scarpa was born in Vicenza and has left his mark throughout Venice and the Veneto. We will see several more examples of his work during the course of the trip. Down the road from the cemetery is Palladio's Villa Emo, a most sublime a farmhouse. After lunch, we will visit the Villa Barbaro in Maser. Designed by Palladio and decorated by Veronese, this is one of the Veneto's most sumptuous treats. (Asolo, lunch)

April 11, Monday

Today we arrive in Venice! We will settle briefly into our hotel and then proceed directly to an early lunch. Venice divides neatly into six administrative districts called sestrieri. After lunch, we will begin with the San Marco *sestriere*, which is the heart of Venice. In addition to showing us the glories of the Piazza San Marco, Nancy will use this walk as a chance to discuss how the landscape of Venice evolved from marshy bogs to a fanfare of palaces. You will note that in

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Venice we are eating lunch most days as a group while dinners are unscheduled. In the evenings we will help steer people toward good restaurants, trattorias, and wine bars near our hotel.

Please note: In Venice we try to take advantage of special offerings, shows, demonstrations, concerts and whatever else is up for grabs. Thus, our program is always in flux. (Palazzo Sant'Angelo, Venice, lunch)

April 12, Tuesday

In the morning we will explore the sestrieri of Santa Croce and San Polo. The highlights are the treasure trove church of the Frari with works by most important Venetian artists and Tintoretto's Scuola di San Rocco, a high water mark of Baroque art. After lunch we will have an optional visit to Venice's art gallery, the Accademia. Venice offers visitors such an abundance of different ways to while away the day. Some of you may choose to join the afternoon walks while others may justifiably prefer shopping or simply ambling through back alleys. (Venice, Lunch)

April 13, Wednesday

Today, weather permitting; we will explore other islands in the Venetian Lagoon. On our last trip to Venice, we visited the Murano glassworks of Venini, unquestionably the best of the lot, with stunning museum-quality works by important twentieth century designers. The showroom alone, designed by a follower of Carlo Scarpa, is worth the journey. We hope that they will be able to accommodate us once again. Nearby Murano, the grassy and overgrown island of Torcello has a beautiful 7th century cathedral with exquisite mosaics. Other islands offer enticing curiosities. In the afternoon we plan to visit the Palazzo Labia with splendid frescoes by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo. (Venice, Lunch)

April 14, Thursday

Our final day in Venice focuses on the Cannaregio and Castello sestrieri. Wonderful gems lay in our path: The Scuola di San Giorgio with its series of paintings by Carpaccio, the beautiful church of the Miracoli, the Palazzo Querini Stampalia with galleries and a garden by Carlo Scarpa, the church of Santa Maria in Formosa, and a favorite little bead shop where we always seem to get hung up. (Venice, Farewell Dinner)

April 15, Friday

The tour ends with breakfast. We will organize water taxis to the airport or the train station.

Bed and Board

Results of an informal Italian Journeys poll indicated that almost everyone appreciates creature comforts. With this in mind, we have chosen hotels of a consistently high standard. In Mira we will be staying at a fully renovated villa on the Brenta Canal. Next we spend two nights in Vicenza at a newly opened, very comfortable hotel near the historic center. Then we have two nights at the famous Villa Cipriani in Asolo. In Venice we are staying at the Palazzo Sant'Angelo, a small four-star hotel on the Grand Canal with an accommodating staff and beautiful views.

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Group meals are indicated on the itinerary. We have found some excellent restaurants in both the Veneto and Venice. We can look forward to meals that range from home-style to highly sophisticated. As with all our trips, for group meals, Nancy will order a set menu, sometimes with various selections, always aimed at acquainting us with regional and seasonal specialties. We will, of course, accommodate all dietary needs.

Costs and Reservation Information

Cost per person, double occupancy: \$6,200

Single supplement: \$1350

This includes ten nights in hotels, all scheduled meals, all admission fees, guide fees, tips, private bus, and water transportation in and around Venice. Not included are air and airport transportation, drinks other than wine served with meals, hotel "extras," unscheduled meals, and discretionary purchases.

Tour reservations require a deposit of \$500.

For further details:

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