

Venice, Italy

(Special Mediterranean Itinerary)

“The Floating City” is one of the **most romantic places** in Europe. Perched off the northeastern coast of Italy, Venice is famous for its art, music, and architecture which weaves through the city’s history like the gondolas and water taxis along the city’s canals.



Venice from the Ponte di Rialto

The city is built upon an **archipelago of 117 small islands**, which are linked by 409 bridges over 177 canals in a shallow lagoon. The canals serve the same function as roads in the older areas, and the main methods of transportation are by water or on foot. Venezia, as it is called by the locals, is characterized by an elegant sort of decay that only attracts, not detracts, from a visit. The city retains its charm as a monument to the Renaissance, from the gondoliers gliding down the canals and little shops tucked into corners and crevices to the majestic palaces and belltowers soaring overhead. In the evenings, Venice really shines, making it perfect for romantic strolls along the quiet canals, the only sounds the lapping of the water at the ancient walls around you.

Venice is the stuff of legends. The name itself comes from the ancient *Veneti* people who lived in the area about 3000 years ago. Refugees from nearby Roman cities later congregated here, and the first church was founded in the year 421. Geography and politics combined to isolate Venice, and the city gained increasing autonomy. Charlemagne attempted to conquer the city, but failed when the soldiers contracted diseases from local swamps. Venice emerged as a city state of military and commercial power, becoming the **most prosperous European city** by the 13th century. Venice lost her independence when Napoleon conquered the city in 1797.

Size: 160 sq. mi. (414.5 sq. km.)

Climate: Humid subtropical

Temperatures: 42°F (5.8°C) to 81.5°F (27.5°C)

Population: 270,000

Busy Season: May, June, September, October

Language: English

Money: Euro (€)

Time Zone: CET (UTC+1)

Transportation: Walking, boats, buses

Phones: Area Code 041, dial 113 for police, or 800-355-920 for tourism issues

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Making the Most of Venice

GETTING THERE

The Disney Magic enjoys an overnight visit to Venice in 2013 and 2014, and berths at the **Venice Cruise Terminal** (*Marittima*) on the far west side of the city. You'll arrive at Piazzale Roma, which is right on the Grand Canal. The nearest *vaporetto* (water bus) stop is S. Marta. The train station is also nearby, north of Piazzale Roma, which leads to the mainland. You can easily walk from the cruise terminal right into the city if you wish. All ashore time is 1:00 pm; all aboard is at 5:00 pm the following day.

GETTING AROUND

Venice is a **confusing network** of canals, pathways, and bridges. If you're moving about the city on your own, get a good, detailed map (the shopping flyer available as you disembark usually has a decent map). Venice is the original and oldest pedestrian city, so you can get everywhere on foot. But it's typically faster, and more scenic, to take a boat. **Vaporetto** (large water buses) have regular routes along the Grand Canal. The #1 *vaporetto* route stops at every stop along the Grand Canal, making it the best choice for sightseeing. Price is €7 for 75 minutes of travel time. Another option are the **traghetti**, which are largish, undecorated gondola used to ferry pedestrians across points in the canals without bridges—price is just €1–2 per crossing, a bargain! Finally, we would be remiss without mentioning the famous **gondola**, which should really be considered an attraction rather than a valid method of transportation because it is very pricey—official prices per gondola are €80–100 for 40 minutes, with each additional 20 minutes costing €40–50. If you're with friends or a group, go together and split the cost—most gondolas hold 6 passengers. And beware of gondoliers who may try to get more from you—negotiate the price upfront (feel free to haggle).

SAFETY

Your biggest challenge in Venice will be to **avoid getting lost**. Bring a good map and pay attention to official signs. Beyond that, Venice is pretty safe. If you're walking at night, choose well-lit areas for safety (and to avoid falling into the water). Don't touch the water—untreated sewage is released directly into the canals.

SHOPPING

Venice has **many shops** selling masks, costumes, Venetian glass, and the usual designer Italian brands (Gucci, Prada, etc.) The Rialto market is another shopping destination, as is the touristy Piazza San Marco. Note that most shop hours are 9:00 am to 12:30 pm and 3:00 pm to 7:30 pm, Monday–Saturday. Just keep your receipts in case questioned (law requires customers keep receipts).

Touring Venice


VENICE MAP

Venice has many famous sights to see. **Doge's Palace** in Piazza San Marco will be familiar to anyone who's seen Epcot's Italy pavilion—ask about the Secret Itinerary guided tour (€16) which shows, among other things, Casanova's jail. The nearby **Bell Tower of St. Mark** offers excellent views of the city and lagoon for €8. **St. Mark's Basilica** is something to behold and right in Piazza San Marco—you can go in for free (or pay €1,50 to reserve official tickets online), but you must be dressed appropriate (no short skirts or bare shoulders) and photography/filming is forbidden. There's also a museum upstairs (€5) and the opportunity to view the high altar and treasury (€2). **Galleria dell'Accademia di Venezia** (€6,50) is one of Venice's most important art museums. If you're looking for something to do in the evenings beyond a gondola ride, you can simply wander about Piazza San Marco or enjoy a meal at nearby place like **Restaurant la Caravella**, where you can eat in a traditional courtyard (<http://www.restaurantlacaravella.com>). If you want to drink, head over to Erbaria on the west side of the Rialto Bridge. For more details on Venice attractions as well as web cams, visit the Official City of Venice page at <http://www.comune.venezia.it>.

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Embarking on Port Adventures in Venice

Of the 24 excursions offered by Disney Cruise Line at press time, here our are **recommended port adventures** for first-time visitors to Venice:

Low Budget: We like the Taste of Venice (\$59/\$49 ages 3–9), which offers a moderate 110-minute walking tour of the city, down narrow alleys and across bridges. This walking tour utilizes a headset so you can hear the guide better. If you want to see the San Marco area, do Venice On Your Own (\$49/\$39 ages 3–9) with private motor boat transportation from the pier to the plaza and back again—you get three hours of time to explore Venice on your own.

Big Budget: The Cooking Lesson at a Venetian Home (\$599 ages 21 and up) is a signature experience and the opportunity to visit the 16th century home of a Venetian. You'll meet Countess Lelia Passi, who will teach you Italian cooking secrets, after which you'll enjoy an elegant lunch in her stately dining room.

Active: Grand Canal by Dragon Boat (\$299/\$279 ages 8–9) takes you to the Canottieri Bucintoro Rowing Club where you'll learn how to row the dragon boat for 90 minutes with up to 19 other rowers. The Gondolier for a Day (\$379 ages 16 and up) teaches you how to punt the traditional, flat-bottomed gondola, then you get to propel your craft for about 60 minutes! Be sure to bring hats, sunglasses, and sunscreen for these adventures!

Kids: The Mask Workshop, St. Mark's Square and Doge's Palace (\$319/\$299 ages 5–9) gives kids the opportunity to make their own mask at a local Venetian mask shop while their parents can do some shopping or sightseeing nearby. The tour also includes a walking tour of nearby attractions and a visit to Doge's Palace for all participants.

Armchair: Venetian Panoramic Cruise (\$52/\$42 ages 3–9) is perfect—the only walking is from the pier to the loading zone. Boat tours like this are certainly scenic, but isolate you from the real charm of the city.

Beyond Venice: The Murano Glass and Burano Lace excursion (\$65/\$49 ages 3–9) starts with a 45 minute boat ride to Murano, where you can witness glassblowers at work. You'll then visit the island of Burano, once renown for the finest lace in Europe. This tour packs a lot of sightseeing (4–4.5 hours) into its relatively low price.

