



Art History of Venice

Painting, sculpture & architecture in the world's most beautiful city

10–16 November 2025 (MK 849)

7 days • £3,390

Lecturer: Dr Susan Steer

Wide-ranging survey of art and architecture with an emphasis on the Renaissance.

Off-peak dates, smaller group than usual (maximum 18 participants).

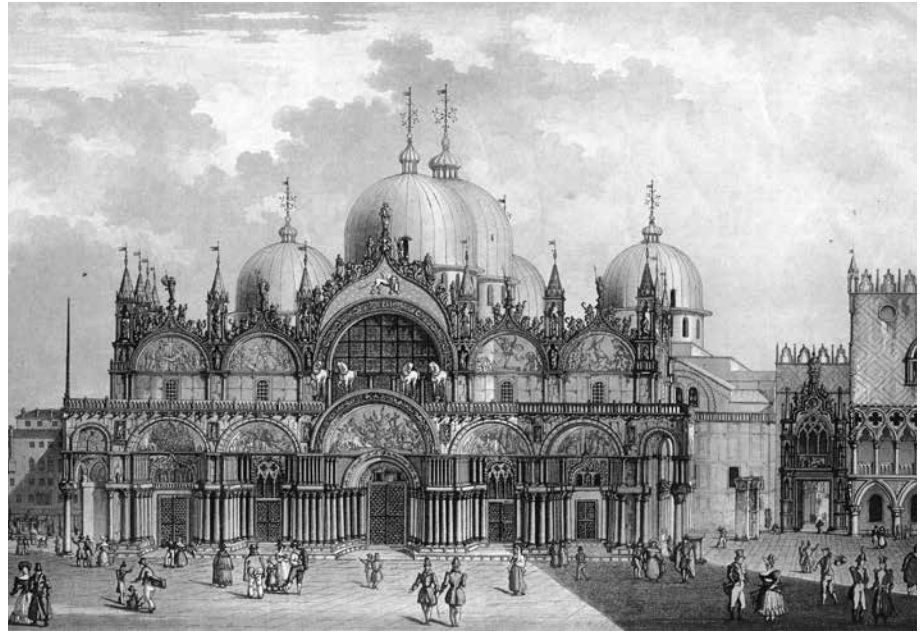
Includes a private, after-hours visit to St Mark's Basilica to see the transcendental splendour of the Byzantine mosaics.

For the world's most beautiful city, Venice had an inauspicious start. The site was once merely a collection of mudbanks, and the first settlers came as refugees fleeing the barbarian destroyers of the Roman Empire. They sought to escape to terrain so inhospitable that no foe would follow.

The success of the community which arose on the site would have been beyond the wildest imaginings of the first Venetians. By the end of the Middle Ages Venice had become the leading maritime power in the Mediterranean and possibly the wealthiest city in Europe. The shallow waters of the lagoon had indeed kept her safe from malign incursions and she kept her independence until the end of the 18th century. 'Once did she hold the gorgeous East in fee, and was the safeguard of the West, Venice, eldest child of liberty.'

Trade with the East was the source of that wealth and power, and the eastern connection has left its indelible stamp upon Venetian art and architecture. Western styles are here tempered by a richness of effect and delicacy of pattern which is redolent of oriental opulence. It is above all by its colour that Venetian painting is distinguished. And whether sonorous or poetic, from Bellini through Titian to Tiepolo, there remain echoes of the transcendental splendour of the Byzantine mosaics of St Mark's.

That Venice survives so comprehensively from the days of its greatness, so little ruffled by modern intrusions, would suffice to make it the goal of everyone who is curious about the man-made world. Thoroughfares being water and cars nonexistent, the imagination traverses the centuries with ease. And while picturesque qualities are all-pervasive – shimmering Istrian limestone, crumbling stucco, variegated brickwork, mournful vistas with exquisitely sculpted details – there are not half-a-dozen



Basilica di San Marco, aquatint c. 1830.

cities in the world which surpass Venice for the sheer number of major works of architecture, sculpture and painting.

Itinerary

Day 1. Fly at c. 1.30pm (British Airways) from London Heathrow to Venice. Cross the lagoon by *motoscafo* (water-taxi) to the hotel.

Day 2. The morning walk includes S. Zaccaria and S. Giovanni in Bragora, two churches with outstanding Renaissance altarpieces by Vivarini, Bellini and Cima. The Scuola di S. Giorgio degli Schiavoni has a wonderful cycle of painting by Carpaccio. In the afternoon see the incomparably beautiful Doge's Palace with pink Gothic revetment and rich Renaissance interiors. In the evening there is a special after-hours private visit to the Basilica di S. Marco, an 11th-century Byzantine church enriched over the centuries with mosaics, sculpture and various precious objects.

Day 3. Cross the Grand Canal to the San Polo district, location of the great Franciscan church of Sta. Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, which has outstanding artworks including Titian's *Assumption*, and the Scuola Grande di S. Rocco, with dramatic paintings by Tintoretto.

Day 4. In the morning cross the *bacino* to Palladio's beautiful island church of S. Giorgio Maggiore. In the afternoon visit SS. Giovanni e Paolo, a vast Gothic church which is the burial place of 25 doges. The many sepulchres include some masterpieces of Renaissance art.

Day 5. Cross the lagoon by *motoscafo* to the island of Torcello, once the rival of Venice but now scarcely inhabited. Virtually all that remains of the city is the magnificent Veneto-Byzantine cathedral with its 12th-century mosaics. Lunch is at the celebrated Locanda Cipriani. Continue to the island of San Francesco del Deserto, home of a Franciscan Monastery founded in 1230.

Day 6. Spend the morning in the Accademia, Venice's major art gallery, where all the Venetian painters are well represented. The afternoon is free.

Day 7. The Ca' Rezzonico is a magnificent palace on the Grand Canal, now a museum of 18th-century art. Travel by *motoscafo* to Venice airport. Fly to London Heathrow, arriving c. 6.30pm.

Art History of Venice
continued

Lecturer

Dr Susan Steer is an Art historian specialising in Venice. Her MA concentrated on the city's art and architecture and her PhD on Venetian Renaissance altarpieces. As post-doctoral researcher with the University of Glasgow and Neil MacGregor scholar at the National Gallery, she worked as a researcher and editor on the National Inventory of European Painting, the UK's online catalogue of European paintings. She has extensive experience of teaching History of Art for university programmes in the UK and Italy.

Practicalities

Price, per person. Two sharing: £3,390 or £3,250 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £4,060 or £3,920 without flights.

Suggested train itinerary: London – Paris – Turin – Milan – Venice: c. 20 hours.

Included: flights (Euro Traveller) with British Airways (Airbus 320); travel between Venice Airport and hotel by water-taxi, a *vaporetto* pass for the duration of the tour; luggage portorage from and to the airport; hotel accommodation; breakfasts; 1 lunch and 3 dinners with wine, water, coffee; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

Accommodation. Hotel Splendid, Venice (starhotels.com): delightful 4-star hotel situated half-way between Piazza San Marco and the Rialto bridge. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use.*

How strenuous? The nature of Venice means that the city is more often than not traversed on foot. Although part of her charm, there is a lot of walking along the flat and up and down bridges; standing around in museums and churches is also unavoidable. The tour should not be attempted by anyone who has difficulty with everyday walking and stair-climbing. Fitness is essential.

Group size: between 8 and 18 participants.