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# Summer of Discovery

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by the Black Sea

**VENICE**  
Karen Anand goes on a food  
trail in the land of tiramisu  
(And no, Venice isn't sinking)



# © A VENETIAN BANQUET

**Karen Anand**, gourmet specialist and food writer, goes to Venice determined to sample its best. Given that this is the land of the tiramisu, we suspect she had quite a good time on the job

PHOTOGRAPHS SHEENA SIPPY



Some delicious Italian cheeses at Da Ciano on Lido  
Facing page: A Venetian on his tiny balcony, overlooking his vehicle to get around town, the motorboat



Venice's waterways are legendary and gorgeous. The Church of Santa Maria della Salute stands tall at the mouth of the Grand Canal



If you believe Venice is sinking, that's as good a reason as any to go. The latest bulletin however, is that this group of islands – with a tiny main one on which you find Saint Mark's Square and some of the most magnificent museums and churches in the world – is now in no major risk of going under. Thanks to huge efforts by the Italian government in the past few years to support the centuries-old wooden piles and mud flats on which the whole group of islands was built, we can now enjoy this destination for years to come. It's a city of infinite charm, history, art, quirky shopping, and great eating (if you stay clear of the tourist traps). Venice brings warmth to the soul and fills you with a longing to return.

The image I still carry with me from my first visit to Venice, about 10 years ago, is of arriving at the station and seeing an enormous old church in front of me and water all around. I swore to return and I did. Venice is full of film and theatre imagery for me – *The Merchant of Venice* of course, *Death in Venice*, *Don't look Now*, *Everyone Says I Love you*, *The Story of Us*, and more recently, *The Italian Job*. The idea of getting lost in its narrow lanes, the idea of sitting in what Napoleon called 'the most elegant drawing room of Europe' (Piazza San Marco or St Mark's Square), the idea of getting around by boat, the idea of just being somewhere filled with the excitement of trade, spice, glamour and wealth, is a lovely, romantic illusion in itself.

It may sound obvious when I say that Venice is full of history, but it really is true. Wandering around the lanes (*calles*, *rios*, *salizzadas*, *soltoportegos*) and over bridges (Venice has 150 canals and 378 bridges, to be precise), you soon realise, as you lose

your way, that there is nothing here but history. For once in my life, a map is totally useless. It gives you no idea of scale, direction or any credible landmarks. How do you tell the difference between one magnificent church and the next, between a 16th and a 17th-century *palazzo* or between one washing line and another? As you are drawn down an alley by the dim candle light of a quiet eatery or *osteria*, you stumble across a studio making antique stucco mouldings and then trip over an old crumbling fountain, which completely throws you off your initial track. This is what makes Venice dreamy. It's these magical moments, not the Basilica of St Mark and the Doge's Palace, not even St Mark's Square and the orchestra outside Caffe Florian.

Today, most average Venetians don't actually live in Venice any more, but they *do* work here. So, in reality Venice really is a city living on its past glory. Each of its six unique districts, or *sestieri*, has its own style and sensibility; sleepy, bustling, sophisticated and arty. They are all doable on foot and by boat; either *vaporetti* or water buses, gondola (if you have availed of a bank loan recently) or water taxi, if you are really desperate or have a bottomless budget. A good way to try a cheap *gondola* ride is to cross the Grand Canal in one. It is called a *traghetto*, costs 50 cents and is always available outside the Rialto Market. If you want to blend in, stand. Venetians never sit in a *traghetto*.

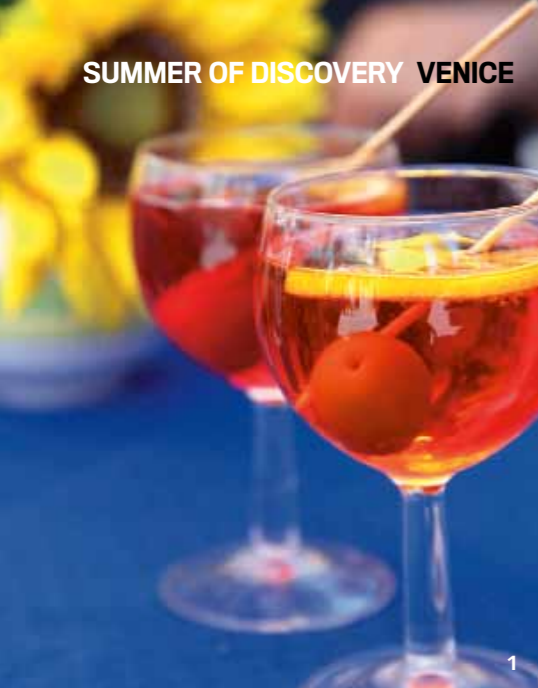
Venice also has amazing shops, which

1. Masks from Venice are a must-buy. Make sure you get authentic pieces, though
2. The iconic gondolier, one of only 400 left in Venice (the dress code, knowledge and manoeuvres are as mandatory as the good looks)
3. Pinocchio is an Italian story, hence a memorable souvenir
4. Giovanni, a regular at the *bacara* Al Merca, enjoys some good food and drink (see ways to do it)
5. Head to the Rialto Market for some *capasante* (scallops)
6. Biking is another great way to see the Lido shore

you must see even if you don't buy. Rene Caovilla is the name for haute couture shoes (on San Marco). Jesurum is the oldest name in the city for lace. Situated in an old house on San Marco too, Gianni Basso is the last word in custom-engraved stationery. An added bonus is that you might bump into Hugh Grant while you are there – he's a regular! If you fancy a trek to Murano, then Gianni Seguso still employs centuries-old techniques to produce some of the most sought-after, custom-made glassware in the world. Predictably, shops near the Rialto Market stock cheeses, gourmet products (*Mascari*) and pasta (*Il Pastaio*). I found an incredible delicatessen, or *salumeria*, called *Da Ciano* on Via S Gallo on Lido island.

There are just a few things to remember about Venice that I guarantee will make all the difference. First, try and avoid July and August. This is not just to sidestep the tourists, tourist traps and tourist prices. I certainly didn't know how hot and humid it gets during these months: it's almost like Thailand! The temperature is always uncomfortable, even though you are by the water, and often soars into the 40s, the humidity easily in the 90s most days. Both the temperature and the humidity start to soar in the early hours of the morning, ►





so there's no escaping either no matter what time you set out. Evenings are almost worse, with air-conditioning a must, something Venetians are not used to except in luxury hotels. May, September and October – guarantee decent weather and thinner crowds. November to March is cheaper with few tourists, but the weather can be severe and unpleasantly chilly and many of the more famous hotels, and restaurants are actually closed.

Here is a collage of what Venice means to me.

**TIRAMISU**

Venice, to me, is in a way tiramisù, the quintessential Italian restaurant dessert, which reportedly was invented in the Veneto region only about 30 or 40 years ago. Everybody has a story about how and where it originated. These are some of them...

It was invented in Tuscany for a duke and named *dolce de duca*. Mascarpone was already around and being whipped up but cooks to the Tuscan nobility took the dish to another level by adding the coffee-soaked biscuits and chocolate powder, after which the humble cream became a 'dessert'. It was later somehow taken to Treviso, a small town near Venice, where it soon gained the reputation of being somewhat of an aphrodisiac and was served as a 'pre-encounter' dessert responsible for gastronomic foreplay.

Another says it was originally created for children and the elderly so there was no alcohol, and that it was a round cake.

A third goes: it was created during the First World War in northern Italy. Women made these desserts for their men to take

1. Spritz, the local aperitivo
2. Luciano Codolo dunking her *saviardi* biscuit into Marsala wine...one of the stories behind the origin of tiramisù
3. We didn't expect this familiar sight in Venice at all

with them as they were being sent off to war. It was believed that the high caffeine and rich content would give the men energy to fight and return safely. 'Tiramisù' literally means 'pull me up,' a reference to the effects of the sugar and espresso – which in English becomes 'pick me up.'

A fourth, it was invented for mothers after delivery. The original recipe was *crema di mascarpone* – mascarpone beefed up with Marsala wine, egg yolks and sugar, made to fortify mothers just before and after delivery, and it was only later made into a dessert.

Basically, it's supposed to be a winter dessert like *zabaglione*, because mascarpone is still available only in winter. However, because of the huge demand for tiramisù in restaurants, many cooks add cream instead of mascarpone or add cream to mascarpone. Also, this is a dessert, not a cake, and therefore you will find it in homes and restaurants only, and not in patisseries.

A final origin story is that it all started off with elderly ladies doing their shopping at the Rialto Market in Venice. Since it wasn't really becoming for women to be seen drinking, they would stop by at a Rialto café to have a quick 'pick me up' after shopping. This would consist of a *saviardi* biscuit which they would dunk into a glass of sweet, fortified Marsala wine. This was washed down with a strong espresso. Some clever restaurant owner in Treviso picked up on this and soon created a dessert around these core ingredients. This is the story given to us by a formidable Venetian cook, Luciano Codolo, whose family recipe I've included here (see box).

**HOW TO MAKE TIRAMISU**



This quintessential Italian restaurant dessert was reportedly invented in the Veneto region only about 30 or 40 years ago. Interestingly, everybody has a story about how and where it originated

Serves 8

- 5 egg yolks
- 1 whole egg
- 150g (3/4 cup) sugar
- 1kg mascarpone (absolutely fresh, or use half mascarpone, half cream)
- 450ml espresso
- 90ml (3 single pegs) dark rum (optional)
- 50g (approx 10 tsp) sugar for espresso
- 500g *Saviardi* ('ladyfinger' biscuits)
- 3tbsp cocoa powder

Beat the egg yolks and whole egg with the sugar for at least six to seven minutes with an electric blender until really smooth. Fold in the mascarpone by hand with a wooden spatula, preferably at room temperature (cold mascarpone takes longer to mix). Layer a ceramic or glass dish with a thin layer of the mascarpone mix.

Combine the espresso, dark rum (if using) and the sugar for espresso.

Soak *saviardi* in the espresso, one by one, on one side, (they shouldn't get too soggy); then place one layer on the mascarpone mix. Coat with about 1cm mascarpone mix and repeat with another layer of biscuits; coat with the remaining mascarpone.

Place in the fridge for at least four hours and sprinkle with cocoa powder before serving.

**THE QUINTESSENTIAL VENETIAN RESTAURANT: ANTICA LOCANDA MONTIN**

I was recommended this local haunt, off the beaten tourist track yet very accessible in the fashionable side of Venice, right next to the University. Not difficult to find since the lantern outside has the name of the restaurant on it and the baskets overflowing with geraniums immediately catch the eye. Inside, locals play baccarat and at the back is a charming garden with home-style seating and chequered tablecloths. The painter Modigliani, it seems, was a regular here at the turn of the century. The iconic Italian film, *Anonimo Veneziana*, was also shot here in the late '60s. This is a family-run place where everything is home-cooked, so there are some hits and misses. It is called 'a refuge' by the old owner, which it certainly was after a morning of walking Venice's tiny lanes and alleys. The food is comforting, honest and inexpensive for Venice. Try the *taglierini con San Pietro zucchini e crema di fioridi zucca*, many words for a simple baked dish of pasta in white sauce with fish and cream of zucchini flowers. The *fritto misto*, a variety of local seafood, deep-fried and served with lemon and pesto, is especially good with a glass of chilled prosecco, the slightly fruity local sparkling wine – which is often cheaper in this city than mineral water. The *scampi*, sweet baby shrimp, is the best thing on the menu.

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**OFF THE BEATEN PATH: ORGANIC IN VENICE**

Lido is an island about 15 minutes by boat from St Mark's, on which posh Italians spend

their summers. Wander a little off the main ferry road and you hit La Rotonda, a modest-looking, modern restaurant serving the best seafood and vegetables in Venice, at a fraction of the price you would pay on the main island. This is simply because the owner Salvatore Manzi, a salt-of-the-earth kind of guy, is obsessed with quality. All the vegetables and fruit come from his organic farm on the island, where he grows several different varieties of tomatoes, chillies, plums, apples, pears, aubergines and so on. Try the *fritto misto* here with grilled *branzini* (local sea bass), *gamberetti* (shrimps), *cozze* (mussels), *seppioline* (baby squid) and *scampi*. The platters of simple, stir-fried tossed aubergine and zucchini flowers are a treat. The seafood is all locally caught and the pizzas incredible. There's loads of quiet charm at this family-run restaurant.

**CIPRIANI**

Cipriani is a unique hotel on a tiny island called Giudecca, across from St Mark's Square in Venice, with a larger-than-life, almost mythical reputation involving celebrities, stars, scandals, the rich and the famous. I was awestruck even before I visited. The reality of Cipriani hits you smack in the face as you are greeted by the very Italian, very charming, utterly flirtatious Roberto Senigallia, the doorman, as you climb off Cipriani's private motor boat at the hotel. Anyone visiting Cipriani can avail of this 10-minute ride from St Mark's jetty, not just people who are staying there. Roberto quickly whisks you off to meet Gigi Racanelli, the head concierge, who's been at Cipriani forever –

4. Espresso, a favourite pastime for Venetians
5. The charming outdoor seating of Antica Locanda Montin makes you want to live in Venice
6. Organic tomatoes from Salvatore Manzi's farm
7. A woman mimes on the streets of Venice

and looks like an Italian version of Maurice Chevalier, with gestures and gesticulations straight out of an old movie. Following him is the public relations manager, who looks more a film star than a hotel executive. It's as if the whole team was empowered with a genuine urge to please; more Asian than Italian, really. This treatment wasn't just for us. I saw a replay of the entire scene on the next arrivals off the boat.

It was only then that I realised what makes Cipriani not only one of the most famous, sought-after destination hotels in the world, and more importantly, why it has an endless list of repeat 'who's who' of guests year after year, even when the film festival is not on. At the risk of repeating a cliché, it's the bunch of devotees who run the place that makes Cipriani memorable.

The food at Cipriani is another reason people stay here. Understated elegance, like the hotel itself. Executive chef Renato Piccolotto, a man of shy disposition and huge talent, has many stories to tell. He started working here as a boy and was trained by Giuseppe Cipriani himself in the early '70s at Villa Cipriani in Asolo. He then came to work at the Cipriani, where he carries on the great cooking traditions of the founder by serving authentic Venetian fare... *cicale di mare* (a sort of greyish crayfish), *gamberetti della laguna all' olio del Garda* (tiny sweet shrimp with olive oil from Lake Garda), *risotto al nero di seppia alla Veneziana* (risotto with squid ink), *fiori di zucca fritti farciti con mozzarella e pomodorini appassiti* (zucchini flowers stuffed with a creamy mix of mozzarella and fresh tomato). ▶





An incredibly quaint sight: a local 'floating' vegetable market



1



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He has catered to presidents, politicians and film stars and to this day, personally whips up a simple dish of pasta and tomato sauce for Charlize Theron at three in the morning when she stays at the hotel. Other stars he has catered to – and who regularly return – include Elizabeth Taylor, Tom Hanks, Angelina Jolie, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Steven Spielberg, Robert de Niro, Nicole Kidman, Martin Scorsese, Dustin Hoffman and Sophia Loren. The list also includes royalty: the late Princess Diana, the Prince of Sweden, musicians like Miles Davis, Elton John and Paul McCartney, designers including Pierre Cardin, Emmanuel Ungaro, Kenzo, Donatella Versace and Giorgio Armani; and George Clooney, not because he's the most famous nor the best looking, but because he achieved immortality here by creating a cocktail, Buona Notte, the recipe of which is autographed and framed and the drink served at the Bar Gabbiano at the hotel, every night.

The other famous cocktail served here is the Bellini. Although served all over Venice, the original recipe, using juice squeezed from fresh white peaches and prosecco, is credited to Giuseppe Cipriani himself, who created it in 1948 in Harry's Bar in Venice, much praised even by Hemingway. The name comes from a Renaissance painter, Giovanni Bellini, known as Giambellino, whose works were at that time being shown in the city. Walter Bolzonella, the bar man at the Cipriani, recreates a perfect Bellini – mind you, only during the summer months, since he doesn't believe in using the frozen white-peach puree to which others in Venice have succumbed. I must say, sitting at Cip's Club, the Cipriani restaurant on the ground floor

1. Grappa, a clear spirit made from grape must
2. Speedboats are a faster option to zip around Venice

of the *palazzetto*, on the edge of the water, a perfect Bellini, chilled and blushing pink, is pretty much the best *aperitivo* money can buy.

Today, owned by the uber-luxury Orient Express hotel/cruise chain, there seem to be no boundaries to Cipriani's endless acquisition of neighbouring old *palazzos* and *palazzettos*, all adding to the charm and grandeur of the property. A few doors down, however, is Elton John's house. I doubt they'll be able to touch that – but you never know! Most rooms at Cipriani overlook the water. It has the largest swimming pool in Venice, a vegetable garden and lush lawns, named the 'Casanova Gardens'. Apparently, Casanova got up to his amorous tricks in or near this spot in an area known as the 'Casanova orchards'. It was here that the legendary lover held clandestine trysts with the daughters of rich Venetian families, who were sent to this island to remove them from any temptations in Venice!

Giudecca, until quite recently, was considered a place to vacation rather than live, despite its proximity to the main island. This accounts for the resort look and feel of the hotel. It's a modest hotel in terms of rooms – 40 doubles plus 21 suites and 30 junior suites. It is the fabulous Doge's suite on the first floor of the Palazzo Vendramin, formerly the home of a 15th-century Venetian noble family, which takes your breath away. It has a timeless, romantic view of the *canaletto* overlooking St Mark's and is completely restored with period furniture, upholstery and local Fortuny lamps. All suites at the Cipriani come complete with their own butlers.

Cipriani is an institution that has to be experienced at least once in your lifetime. LP

## HOW TO MAKE CIPRIANI'S BELLINI



The original recipe is credited to Giuseppe Cipriani, who created it in 1948

**Serves 8-10, depending on thirst!**

**1/3 fresh white peach juice (see below)**  
**2/3 prosecco (sparkling wine)**

White peach juice: Peel and slice 1 kg of white peaches. Dip in a mix of 500ml water and 200ml fresh lemon juice (the peaches must be covered with water and lemon). Remove the peaches from the liquid, and blend with crushed ice and two spoons of sugar. Add the juice of a few raspberries or cherries to make the drink pink in colour. When the peaches are in season, this is not necessary, as peaches give their own colour. (Since white peaches are not easily available in India, use peach juice [the Ceres brand] with a splash of Monin peach syrup [also available in India].) Pour into a chilled champagne flute. Top with chilled prosecco.

## ESSENTIAL VENICE

A speedboat cuts through the Basin of San Marco



### GONDOLA RIDES

They're overpriced but it is possible to strike a good deal with the gondolier. Glide through the trademark blue-grey waters while the other tourists elbow their way through crowds on the banks, and see Venice how it was meant to be seen: from the water (rides from ₹ 4,900 for up to six people).

### BASILICA DI SAN MARCO

A singularly beautiful edifice, the Basilica di San Marco's genius lies in the details. The gold mosaic domes and murals require an hour or two to appreciate, but usually, you are hurried along by the staff and allowed only a few minutes ([basilicasanmarco.it](http://basilicasanmarco.it); Piazza di San Marco; treasury ₹ 190, Pala d'Oro ₹ 120, Museo di San Marco ₹ 245).

### PIAZZA DI SAN MARCO

Everyone gravitates to the piazza, drawn by the major Venetian monuments. Once the monuments shut for the day, musicians around the cafés around the piazza take over, giving the square a laidback, almost-tropical vibe. Have coffee at Florian, the famous 18th-century Venetian café (sit at the bar inside, it's cheaper; no shorts allowed). If you can't afford the prices in the cafes, just sit outside and enjoy the feel of the place and people-watch (00-39-41-520-5641; [caffeflorian.com](http://caffeflorian.com); Piazza San Marco).

### SHOPPING

For a taste of everyday Venetian life, pay a visit to the **Rialto Market**. It's a great place to pick up supplies for a picnic lunch. Check

out the food-savvy Venetians comparing purchases in the historic fish market, which has been in the same spot since 1300 (*Ruga degli Orefici*).

Shop for genuine masks at **Alberto Sarria**, who still makes masks by hand (next to the Rialto at San Polo, 777, *Ruga Rialto*).

### DOGE'S PALACE

A few days before your dawn visit to Piazza San Marco, pre-book tickets for the Secret Itineraries tour of the Doge's Palace. This takes you behind the scenes of the Venetian Republic, including a visit to legendary lothario Casanova's prison cell ([tickitaly.com](http://tickitaly.com); ₹ 1,400).

### CASTELLO AND ARSENALE

Visit the areas of Castello and Arsenale, to the extreme east of Venice's main island, where, for some reason, no tourists go. Here you will see local Venetian life: apartments with clothes hung out to dry, bars serving *cicchetti*, local snacks of fried cod fish, fried mozzarella and gorgonzola sandwiches, olives stuffed with anchovies and meat, fluorescent orange Spritz, and vegetables and fruit sold from gondola shops.

### MURANO

If you have the time, a *vaporetto* (water bus) ride to the nearby island of Murano is definitely worth the effort. This tiny island has been known for its delicate glass works for more than a thousand

years now; you can visit factories like Fondamenta dei Vetrai to see the process. It welcomes visitors, but watch out for pushy salespeople (*Vaporetto ride*: ₹ 400 single ride, multi-journey passes available).

### LOCAL BUBBLY

Having an *aperitivo*, a pre-lunch or -dinner drink is acceptable, even encouraged, at any time of the day. Prosecco, the local bubbly, is excellent and often cheaper than mineral water. Spritz is the other suggestion – either Campari or the local, slightly-bitter Aperol splashed with prosecco, and sometimes a touch of soda or sparkling mineral water, garnished with an orange slice.

### GALLERIE DELL'ACCADEMIA

It's very likely that it takes you an entire day to see Venice's contribution to art. Or pinpoint paintings that you must see – Bellini's *Madonna and Child* or Giorgione's *The Tempest* perhaps – and dash past the rest ([gallerieaccademia.org](http://gallerieaccademia.org); *Campo della Carità, Dorsoduro No 1050*; ₹ 400).

### ROOFTOP VIEWS

Many B&Bs, restaurants and big hotels in Venice have terraces or balconies that look out onto the city. You can also just go up the *campanile*, or bell tower, that punctuates the Piazza di San Marco, but if you can afford it, there's nothing like having a croissant and coffee on your own sunny balcony while watching the city wake up (*Bell Tower: Piazza di San Marco; 9.30am-3.45pm; ₹ 500*).

## MAKE IT HAPPEN

# VENICE

### ESSENTIALS

#### Getting there

Turkish Airlines, Swiss, Austrian Airlines, Air France, British Airways, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, Emirates Airlines, Etihad Airways, Jet Airways and Air India fly from Mumbai and New Delhi to Venice's Marco Polo International Airport. Return airfares start at ₹ 31,500.

#### Getting around

Hiring a gondola is romantic, but it can be a pricey way of getting around the city. Most people go by foot and by the *vaporetti*, the city's ferries. Buy a 12-hour ticket, ₹ 900, from the Hello Venezia ticket booths at most stops.

#### Further reading

Pick up Lonely Planet's guides *Venice & the Veneto* and *Venice Encounter*.

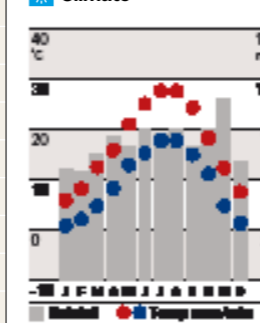
#### Visas

Apply through VFS for a tourist Schengen visa to Italy, it takes about five working days to process ([vfs-italy.co.in](http://vfs-italy.co.in); ₹ 3,600).

#### Currency

1 Euro = ₹ 60 (approx)

#### Climate



### THE FINAL WORD

'The allure of Venice... is distinct from art and architecture. There is something curiously sensual to it, if not actually sexual.' **Jan Morris**, historian, author and travel writer

## 3 WAYS TO DO IT...

	Budget	Mid-range	Luxury
SLEEP	Tucked away in a quiet courtyard near St Mark's Square, <b>Locanda Orseolo</b> is a real find. Many of its carnival-themed rooms offer views over passing gondolas, and the friendly staff makes your stay a special one ( <a href="http://locandaorseolo.com">locandaorseolo.com</a> ; ₹ 8,200).	In the heart of the Rialto, <b>Pensione Guerrato</b> offers spacious rooms and the kind of peace you only find in a former convent. Some rooms feature original wall and ceiling frescoes and face the Grand Canal ( <a href="http://pensioneguerrato.it">pensioneguerrato.it</a> ; ₹ 13,400).	The <b>Bauer II Palazzo</b> is an 18th-century palace hotel a stone's throw from St Mark's. It has been fabulously restored and has amazing views of the Grand Canal (00-39-41-270-3809 <a href="http://bauerhotels.com">bauerhotels.com</a> ; next to St Mark's square).
EAT	<b>Antica Locanda Montin</b> serves food that is comforting, honest and inexpensive for Venice (00-39-41-5227151; <a href="http://locandamontin.com">locandamontin.com</a> ; <i>S Trovaso, Fondamenta Ermete 1147</i> ; ₹ 6,200 for three people with a bottle of prosecco).	<b>La Rotonda</b> makes a mean selection of <i>orata</i> , <i>branzino</i> and <i>rombo</i> (bream, sea bass and turbot), fresh, and cooked and filleted to perfection (00-39-41-5269279; <i>Via Sandro Gallo, Lido</i> ).	<b>Florian</b> is the famous 18th-century Venetian café at St Mark's Square. Sit at the bar inside and have a coffee, or listen to the orchestra outside and people-watch (00-39-41-520-5641; <a href="http://caffeflorian.com">caffeflorian.com</a> ; Piazza San Marco).
	Stop at a <i>bacaro</i> , a local hang-out kind of bar. I found the perfect one, <b>al Merca</b> . Talk to the locals and find out more about the city while there ( <i>Campo Cesare Battisti, San Polo 213</i> ).	Affordable must-tries at the otherwise expensive <b>Gritti Palace Hotel</b> are the bellinis and rossinis. Avoid the touristy Harry's Bar ( <a href="http://gritti.hotelinvenice.com">gritti.hotelinvenice.com</a> ; <i>Campo Santa Maria del Giglio, 2467</i> ).	A truly memorable meal would be at the <b>De Pisis restaurant</b> at Il Palazzo with culinary traditions like pasta made with chestnut flour, filled with wild mushrooms, squid and fresh chilli ( <a href="http://ilpalazzovenetia.com">ilpalazzovenetia.com</a> ).

### Fancy a curry?

**Ganesh ji** may follow the Italian motto of 'slow food', but once the curry is at the table, it won't disappoint (00-39-41-719084; *San Polo 2426, Fondamenta Rio Marin*; veg lunch ₹ 800, non-veg lunch ₹ 1,000, cover charge ₹ 200).

### Veg out

**La Zucca**, or 'the pumpkin', is a lifesaver in meat-loving Venice, and has some delicious options for vegetarians (00-39-41-5241570; [lazucca.it](http://lazucca.it); *Santa Croce 1762*; lunch 12.30pm-2.30pm dinner 7pm-10.30pm Mon-Sat).

### EMBASSY ALERT

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