



## A One-Day Journey to Venice: Personal Hints.

**Venice** is very close to Bologna and can be conveniently reached in one day (of course a true visit would require staying longer, visiting museums, churches, the local islands...). You can travel by train (it takes about 1h30m). Trains leave for Venice almost hourly from the railway station in Bologna. Tickets can be purchased at the station. A one day ticket will cost about 20 EUR.

This is my personal set of suggestions for you if you dedicate one day to Venice, moving from Bologna after PIMRC.

Once the train is in Venice, you will leave the station from the front doors, and you will find the Grand Canal immediately in front of you. At that point you have three options.

First option, for the lazy tourist: you can take the *vaporetto* ("vapour boat" ... though it is no more vapour unfortunately now that moves it), the equivalent of the bus for a city with no asphalt, to reach the place where everyone goes: *Piazza San Marco*. However, ignore the boat stop you find in front of you. Take the right, and walk along the Canal side (on *Fondamenta Santa Lucia*) for one minute. You will reach the newest of the four bridges that cross the Canal. Built few years ago, designed by Calatrava. A piece of modernity in the most romantic city of the world. Cross the bridge, you will find on the immediate right another boat stop. Ask at the desk for a ticket to *Piazza San Marco*. Boats leave every about 15-20 minutes, and take about 30 min to reach *Piazza San Marco*. You will see from the boat very nice facades.

Second option, taken by most (maybe 90%) of tourists. You can reach *Piazza San Marco* by foot, following the mainstream of the million people walking in the same direction. At the exit of the railway station, you start walking along the Canal towards your left. There are signs at every corner pointing to *Piazza San Marco*, you cannot lose yourself. In any case, if you just follow the human horde, you will get to *Piazza San Marco* in about 45-60 minutes or a bit more depending on how many pictures you will take with your camera. It a nice walk, you will see small canals, bridges. No way to get a picture without tens of other noisy tourists in the background...

Third option, the one I love. Forget about the map, and the others. When you leave the station, and you have the Grand Canal in front of you, look on the left. There is a bridge (*Ponte degli Scalzi*). Cross it and start walking, without a precise goal, randomly choosing your directions at each crossing. Lose yourself within the labyrinth of narrow walkways (*calle*), small bridges, tiny canals. Don't worry, at some point in time you will find some sign to *Piazza San Marco* and you can restart your walk. If you are lucky enough, you will find desert parts of Venice, lovely and silent canals. It might take two hours to get to *Piazza San Marco*, but it will be a wonderful experience. You might end up crossing the Grand Canal at *Ponte di Rialto*. Better if you stay on the east side longer, and cross the *Ponte dell'Accademia*.

Once you are in *Piazza San Marco*, you are in the heart of Venice and its history. A wonderful place. Whatever you will eat or drink within 500 m, it will cost like crazy. Visiting the church (*Basilica San Marco*) is a must. Have in mind it might take half an hour or more of queuing. But it deserves it. Also, a visit to *Palazzo Ducale*, on the right hand side, is worth spending one or two hours

On the way back to the train station, same three options. If you liked the third one, this time stay on the other side of the Grand Canal (the west/north side) and walk in the direction of the *laguna*.

Are you going to stop somewhere for lunch? Avoid the crowded areas, it will be expensive, and low quality. I suggest you look for an "osteria" where you can have good "polenta con baccala" or "sarde in saor", with some good local white wine (try *Soave*). Enjoy!

Needless to say, if you can stay overnight, it will be much better. After 7 pm, 95% of tourists will have left the city. There is no place for a romantic evening like Venice. A Vivaldi concert (there are many places for that, with prices for all pockets), dinner, and a walk. *Piazza San Marco*, now, will be for few, mostly standing or sitting around the restaurant dehors where baroque music is played live.

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