

Murano

Murano and Glass: a story told by those who live here

Welcome to Murano.

Before we begin our visit, take a moment to pause, look at the water around you, and imagine traveling back in time, to the heart of the Middle Ages. At that time, Venice was not just a city. It was a **global power**, a city of merchants, ships, and trade routes reaching all the way to the East. Venetians traded spices, silk, and gold... but they also possessed something no one else had: **the secret of glass**.

Venetian glassmakers were **the only ones in the world capable of working glass with such refinement** and, above all, of **changing its color**. It was an incredibly precious skill, one that made Venice both wealthy and feared.

Venetian glass cups, mirrors, and objects reached the courts of kings and popes across Europe.

But this success came with a problem.

Venice welcomed merchants and foreigners from every corner of the world, and the **Doge**, the head of the Republic, feared one thing more than anything else: that someone might **steal the secret of glassmaking**.

So the Doge made a very clever decision.

Officially, he claimed that the furnaces were too dangerous. Venice was built largely of wood, and the risk of fire was extremely high. But in reality, behind this excuse, there was a very precise goal: **to isolate the glassmakers and protect their knowledge**.

At the end of the 13th century, all the glass furnaces were moved here, to Murano.

And from **1295 onward, glassmaking in Venice was prohibited by law**. From that moment on, Murano became the only place authorized to produce glass. This is why **there are no wood-fired furnaces in Venice**, while Murano filled with furnaces, flames, and molten glass. Glassmakers were highly respected, almost like celebrities, but their lives were not easy: **they were not allowed to leave the island without permission**, because their talent was considered a state secret.

Walking through Murano today, what you see is not just a quiet island. It is a place where, for over **700 years**, glass has been shaped by fire, breath, and human hands.

Every object created here holds a story of skill, sacrifice, and pride.

Murano is not just famous for glass.

Murano **is glass**.

Thank you for listening. Enjoy the rest of your visit, and let yourselves be guided by the light reflecting on the glass, just as it has done for centuries.

materials and the glassmaking process

Now that you know the history of Murano, let us move closer to the heart of the furnace and discover how glass is truly made.

Everything begins with very simple materials. The main one is **silica sand**, an

extremely fine sand that, once melted, becomes glass. To this, **soda** is added, which allows the sand to melt at lower temperatures, and **limestone**, which makes the glass stronger and more stable over time.

These ingredients are mixed together and placed inside the furnace, where they reach extremely high temperatures, **over 1,300 degrees Celsius**. Here, the solid material slowly transforms into a glowing mass, fluid like honey: this is molten glass.

However, the glass is not ready yet. It must become perfectly clean and uniform. This stage is called **refining**: air bubbles rise to the surface, and the glass becomes clear and even.

If color is to be added, this is the moment. Glassmakers introduce **metal oxides**:

cobalt for blue, copper for green, manganese for purple, and even small amounts of **gold or silver** to create intense and precious colors. This is exactly where the magic of Murano glass is born.

Once the glass is ready, the most spectacular phase begins: **shaping**. The master glassmaker gathers the molten glass on the end of a long blowpipe and shapes it while it is still hot, blowing, turning, and using special tools.

Everything must happen within a few minutes, before the glass begins to cool. The finished object, however, cannot cool down suddenly. It is placed inside a special furnace for **annealing**, where the temperature is lowered slowly. This step is essential to prevent the glass from cracking or breaking.

And this is how, from sand and fire, a unique object is created.

Every piece of Murano glass is different from the next, because it carries within it the gesture, the breath, and the experience of the master who created it.