Venice

St. Mark’s Basilica

Grand Bridge

Campanile Tower

Basilica di San Marco

Piazza San Marco

Rialto Bridge

St Mark’s Square

Piazzetta dei Leoncini

Basilica di Santa Maria della Salute

Doge's Palace (Palazzo Ducale)

San Giorgio Maggiore

Five major landmarks: Ferrovia (the train station), Piazzale Roma, Rialto (the main bridge), San Marco, and the Accademia (also useful as the only other Grand Canal bridge below the train station).

A leisurely cruise along the Grand Canal from Piazza San Marco to the Ferrovia -- or the reverse -- is one of Venice's must-dos

Symbol of Venice is the winged lion.

Aim for late afternoon before sundown, when the light does its magic on the canal reflections (and bring a bottle of prosecco [a champagnelike wine] and glasses)

There are 12 gondola stations around Venice, including Piazzale Roma, the train station, the Rialto Bridge, and Piazza San Marco.

A ticket valid for 1 hour of travel on a vaporetto is a steep 6.50€, while the 24-hour ticket, at 18€, is a good buy if you'll be making more than two trips spread out through the day.

You'll find a station at the end of any street named Calle del Traghetto on your map and indicated by a yellow sign with the black gondola symbol. The fare is .50€, which you hand to the gondolier when boarding. Most Venetians cross standing up. For the experience, try the Santa Sofia crossing that connects the Ca' d'Oro and the Pescheria fish market, opposite each other on the Grand Canal just north of the Rialto Bridge

Vaperetto

On exiting the Santa Lucia station, you'll find the Grand Canal immediately in front of you, a sight that makes for a heart-stopping first impression. You'll find the docks for a number of vaporetto lines (the city's public ferries or "water buses") to your left and right. Head to the booths to your left, near the bridge, to catch either of the two lines plying the Canal Grande: the no. 82 express, which stops only at the station, San Marcuola, Rialto Bridge, San Tomà, San Samuele, and Accademia before hitting San Marco (26 min. total); and the misnamed no. 1 accellerato, which is actually the local, making 14 stops between the station and San Marco (a 31-min. trip). Both leave every 10 minutes or so, but every other no. 82 stops short at Rialto, meaning you'll have to disembark and hop on the next no. 1 or 82 that comes along to continue to San Marco.

Note: The no. 82 goes in two directions from the train station: left down the Canal Grande toward San Marco -- which is the (relatively) fast and scenic way -- and right, which also eventually gets you to San Marco (at the San Zaccaria stop) but takes more than twice as long because it goes the long way around Dorsoduro (and serves mainly commuters). Make sure the no. 82 you get on is headed to San Marco.

Vaporetto line nos. 1 and 82, described under "By Train," above, both stop at Piazzale Roma before continuing down the Canal Grande to the train station and, eventually, Piazza San Marco.

Bridges

Only four bridges cross the Grand Canal: the Ponte degli Scalzi, just outside and to the left of the train station; the elegant white marble Ponte Rialto (by far the most recognizable bridge and, for centuries, the only one), connecting the districts of San Marco and San Polo; the wooden Ponte Accademia, connecting the Campo Santo Stefano area of the San Marco neighborhood with the Accademia museum across the way in Dorsoduro; and, since late 2008, the futuristic Ponte della Costituzione (also known as the Calatrava bridge, after famed Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava, who designed it), which you will see around the corner to your right when you exit the train station.

Neighborhoods

Based on a tradition dating from the 12th century, for tax-related purposes, the city has officially been divided into six sestieri (literally, "sixths," or wards) that have basically been the same since 1711. The Canalazzo or Canale Grande (Grand Canal) neatly divides them into three on each bank.

San Marco -- The central sestiere is anchored by the Piazza San Marco and the Basilica di San Marco to the south and the Rialto Bridge to the north. This is the most visited (and, as a result, the most expensive) of the sestieri. It's the commercial, religious, and political heart of the city and has been for more than a millennium. It is also its musical heart, home to the legendary La Fenice Opera House; devastated by a fire in 1996, it was reopened in 2005 after an extensive restoration. Although you'll find glimpses and snippets of the real Venice here, ever-rising rents have nudged resident Venetians to look for housing in the outer neighborhoods: You'll be hard-pressed to find a grocery store or dry cleaner here. But if you're looking for Murano glass trinkets and mediocre restaurants, you'll find an embarrassment of choices. This area is a mecca of first-class hotels -- but with direction from Frommer's, you can stay here in the heart of Venice without going broke.

Cannaregio -- Sharing the same side of the Grand Canal with San Marco, Cannaregio stretches north and east from the train station to include the Jewish Ghetto and into the canal-hugging vicinity of the Ca' d'Oro and the Rialto Bridge. Its outer reaches are quiet, unspoiled, and residential ("What high-season tourist crowds?" you may wonder); one-third of Venice's ever-shrinking population of 65,000 is said to live here. Most of the city's one-star hotels are clustered about the train station -- not a dangerous neighborhood but not one known for its charm, either. The gloss and dross of the tourist shop-lined Lista di Spagna strip continues as it morphs into the Strada Nuova in the direction of the Rialto Bridge.

Castello -- This quarter, whose tony Riva degli Schiavoni follows the Bacino di San Marco (St. Mark's Basin), is lined with first-class and deluxe hotels. It begins just east of Piazza San Marco, skirting Venice's most congested area to absorb some of the crowds and better hotels and restaurants. But if you head farther east in the direction of the Arsenale or inland away from the bacino, the people traffic thins out, despite the presence of such major sights as Campo SS. Giovanni e Paolo and the Scuola di San Giorgio.

San Polo -- This mixed-bag sestiere of residential corners and tourist sights stretches northwest of the Rialto Bridge to the principal church of Santa Maria dei Frari and the Scuola di San Rocco. The hub of activity at the foot of the bridge is greatly due to the Rialto market that has taken place here for centuries -- some of the city's best restaurants have flourished here for generations, alongside some of its worst tourist traps. The spacious Campo San Polo is the main piazza of Venice's smallest sestiere.

Santa Croce -- North and northwest of the San Polo district and across the Grand Canal from the train station, Santa Croce stretches all the way to Piazzale Roma. Its eastern section is generally one of the least-visited areas of Venice -- making it all the more desirable for curious visitors. Less lively than San Polo, it is as authentic and feels light-years away from San Marco. The quiet and lovely Campo San Giacomo dell'Orio is considered to be its heart.

Dorsoduro -- You'll find the residential area of Dorsoduro on the opposite side of the Accademia Bridge from San Marco. Known for the Accademia and Peggy Guggenheim museums, it is the largest of the sestieri and has been known as an artists' haven (hence the tireless comparison with New York's Greenwich Village -- a far cry) until recent escalations of rents forced much of the community to relocate elsewhere. Good neighborhood restaurants, a charming gondola boatyard, the lively Campo Santa Margherita, and the sunny quay called le Zattere (a favorite promenade and gelato stop) all add to the character and color that make this one of the city's most-visited areas.

La Giudecca -- Located opposite the Piazza San Marco and Dorsoduro, La Giudecca is a tranquil working-class residential area where you'll find a youth hostel and a handful of hotels (including the deluxe Cipriani, one of Europe's finest).

Venice in One Busy Day

9:00 Take the Grand Canal Cruise, hopping off at the San Tomà stop to tour the Frari Church (except on Sun, when Frari doesn’t open until 13:00).

11:00 From Frari Church, take a 20-minute stroll toward the Rialto Market, then enjoy the market action and browse for lunch. Catch the vaporetto (boat) to your next stop.

13:00 Tour two of the following three museums: the Accademia (Renaissance Venetian art, closes at 14:00 on Mon), the Peggy Guggenheim Collection (modern art, closed Tue), and Correr Museum (overview of Venetian art and history, ticket bought here includes Doge’s Palace).

15:30 Head to — then tour — St. Mark’s Basilica (closes at 17:00 in summer, at 16:00 in winter).

17:00 Visit the Doge’s Palace (in summer closes at 18:30, last entry at 17:30; closes an hour earlier in winter).

18:00 Tour St. Mark’s Square.

19:30 Dinner.

21:00 Gondola ride. If you don’t mind eating late, flip-flop this with dinner, as the gondola at sunset is best.

22:00 Enjoy the dueling orchestras with a drink on St. Mark’s Square.

Milan

Transport

Chances are, you will arrive at Stazione Centrale, but some trains serve Milan's other train stations: Cadorna (with service to and from Como and Malpensa airport, for example), Stazione Lambrate (with service to and from Bergamo and other points east), and Porta Garibaldi (with service to and from Lecco and other points north). Conveniently, all three of these stations, along with Stazione Centrale, are on the same subway line: Linea 2, the green one.

The station stop on the Metro is Centrale F.S.; it is only 10 minutes (and 1€) away from the Duomo stop, in the heart of the city. If you want to see something of the city en route, take the no. 60 bus from the station to Piazza del Duomo

What to See

Dumo

Climbing to the roof of the Duomo: The roof of the city's principal landmark gives you an eagle-eye view over the busy streets and alleys downtown.

Window Shopping in Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II

Heading north from the Piazza del Duomo, walk through the glass-enclosed shopping center (the world's first), the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II. Emerging from the northern end of the Galleria, you'll be just steps away from Piazza della Scala and Milan's famous opera house. A 5-minute walk northeast along Via Manzoni takes you to Via Montenapoleone and the city's high-fashion shopping district, the epicenter of Italian design.

The **Quadrilatero d'Oro** (Golden Rectangle), an area bound by four main streets - Via Montenapoleone, Via Manzoni, Via del Corso, and Via Senato – and traversed by a few more boutique-laden thoroughfares, including Via della Spiga and Via Sant’Andrea is the high-fashion hub of Italy.

Castello Sforzesco

The Castello Sforzesco, named after Francesco Sforza, the Duke of Milan, is a sprawling castle complex a few minutes northwest of the Duomo, and is one of Milan’s most visited attractions.

Lake Como

Getting There -- By Train -- One to three trains hourly connect Milan and Como's Stazione San Giovanni on Piazzale San Gottardo (regional: from Milan's Piazza Garibaldi station, 55-60 min.; high-speed: from Milan's Stazione Centrale station, 40 min.). There are also twice-hourly trains from Milan's Cadorna station to the more convenient Como Lago station right on the shorefront at Piazza Giacomo Matteotti. These trains take about an hour.

Exploring Como -- Part Gothic and part Renaissance, the Duomo, Piazza del Duomo, in the center of town just off the lake (tel. 031-265-244), is festooned with exuberant masonry and sculpture. Statues of two of the town's famous native sons, Pliny the Elder and Pliny the Younger, flank the main entrance.

For a quick retreat and some stunning views, take the funicular (tel. 031-303-608) for a 7-minute ride up to the top of Brunate, the forested hill above the town (it leaves from the Lungo Lario Trieste every 15 min. or so, in summer every half-hour).

Bellagio & the Central Lake Region

By far the loveliest spot on the lake (and where travelers should definitely set their sights) is the section known as the Centro Lago. Three towns -- Bellagio, Varenna, and Menaggio -- sit across the water from one another on three different shorelines.

Getting There & Getting Around -- By Train -- The closest train stations to Bellagio and the other Central Lake towns are in Como -- from which you can continue by bus or boat -- or, more conveniently, in Varenna, with trains hourly to Milan (about 70 min.). If you're planning to leave the central part of the lake after dinner, the 10:30pm train from Varenna to Milan (with an hour stopover in Lecco) will be your last chance to do so.

By Boat -- From Como, boats stop first at Bellagio: by ferry 2 hours, by hydrofoil 35 to 45 minutes. They continue on to Menaggio (by ferry another 15 min., by hydrofoil another 5 min.). About half the boats then stop in Varenna as well (plus there are about two dozen short-haul ferries each from Bellagio and Menaggio to Varenna; by ferry another 10 min.; by hydrofoil another 5 min.). You can also get day passes good for just the central lake or for the whole lake.

Menaggio

The major nearby attraction is about 2.5km (1 1/2 miles) south of town: The Villa Carlotta (tel. 0344-40-405; www.villacarlotta.it) is the most famous villa on the lake

You can take the no. C10 bus from Menaggio or walk along the lake (about 30-45 min.). The nearest ferry landing is at Cadenabbia, just north of the gardens, though ferries to Menaggio are more frequent. The villa and gardens are open daily in March and October through mid-November from 9am to 4:30pm (the villa is closed from noon to 2pm), and April through September from 9am to 6pm.

From Como, ferries and hydrofoils depart to spots up and down the lake. The best value for a whole day's unlimited hopping is the libera circolazione ticket, at €28 for an adult.

It is even possible to see the best of Lake Como in one busy day, using a budget base in Milan. Take an early train from Milan Porta Garibaldi to Como San Giovanni station (€4.55), then walk the sights of central Como en route to the dock. The slow boat to Varenna (€11.60 one way) calls at all the major lake villages, including Bellagio and the Tremezzina. After dinner, take the train from Varenna-Esino back to Milan Centrale (€6.45; see trenord.it for timetables). You'll have seen the very best of Lake Como for under €23, plus spending money.

Villa d'Este, in the village of Cernobbio on the west coast, is the most famous of Lake Como's villas. The villa is now a luxury hotel on a wooded peninsula. Each of its 161 rooms is unique.

Cadenabbia Village

Villa Serbelloni

Villa Balbianello

Pigra Cable Car from Argegno



Cinique Terre

Monterosso

The Cinque Terre’s largest village seems incredibly busy compared to its sleepier neighbors, but it’s not without its charms.

Vernazza

It’s hard not to fall in love with this pretty village. Tall houses cluster around a natural harbor (where you can swim among the fishing boats) and beneath a castle built high atop a rocky promontory that juts into the sea (this castle—which is nothing special—is open Mar–Oct daily 10am–6:30pm; admission 1€). The center of town is waterside Piazza Marconi, itself a sea of cafe tables.

Corniglia

The quietest village in the Cinque Terre is isolated by its position midway down the coast, its hilltop location high above the open sea, and its little harbor. Whether you arrive by boat, train, or the trail from the south, you’ll have to climb more than 300 steps to reach the village proper (arriving by trail from the north is the only way to avoid these stairs), which is an enticing maze of little walkways overshadowed by tall houses.

Once there, though, the views over the surrounding vineyards and up and down the coastline are stupendous—for the best outlook, walk to the end of the narrow main street to a belvedere that is perched between the sea and sky.

Manarola

Not as busy as nearby Riomaggiore or as quaint as its neighbor Corniglia, Manarola is a near-vertical cluster of tall houses that seems to rise piggyback up the hills on either side of the harbor. In fact, in a region with no shortage of heart-stopping views, one of the most amazing sights is the descent into the town of Manarola on the path from Corniglia: From this perspective, the hill-climbing houses seem to merge into one another to form a row of skyscrapers. Despite these urban associations.

Riomaggiore

Riomaggiore clings to the vestiges of the Cinque Terre’s rustic ways while making some concessions to the modern world.

From the parking garage, follow the main drag down; from the train station, exit and turn right to head through the tunnel for the main part of town (or, from the station, take off left up the brick stairs to walk the Via dell’Amore to Manarola).

That tunnel and the main drag meet at the base of an elevated terrace that holds the train tracks. From here, a staircase leads down to a tiny fishing harbor, off the left of which heads a rambling path that, after a few hundred meters, leads to a pleasant little beach of large pebbles

Walks

Aside from swimming and soaking in the atmosphere of unspoiled fishing villages, the most popular activity in the Cinque Terre is hiking from one village to the next along centuries-old goat paths.

The walk from Monterosso to Vernazza is the most arduous and takes 1 1/2 hours, on a trail that makes several steep ascents and descents (on the portion outside Monterosso, you’ll pass beneath funicular-like cars that transport grapes down the steep hillsides). The leg from Vernazza to Corniglia is also demanding and takes another 1 1/2 hours, plunging into some dense forests and involving some lengthy ascents, but is among the prettiest and most rewarding stretches. Part of the path between Corniglia and Manarola, about 45 minutes apart, follows a level grade above a long stretch of beach, tempting you to break stride and take a dip. From Manarola to Riomaggiore, it’s easy going for about half an hour along a partially paved path known as the Via dell’Amore, so named for its romantic vistas (great to do at sunset).

Since all the villages are linked by rail, you can hike as many portions of the itinerary as you wish and take the train to your next destination.

The only sandy beach in the Cinque Terre is the crowded strand in Monterosso, on much of which you will be asked to pay about 10€ to 15€ per day for two chairs and an umbrella.

Wear layers of breathable clothing, especially in the fall and winter. And in the spring and summer, don’t forget sunscreen, hats, sunglasses and a bathing suit to enjoy a swim in the Ligurian sea, the perfect post-hike reward.

Bring plenty of water and snacks to avoid being forced to buy drinks in the towns.

Wear appropriate shoes, like hiking shoes or comfortable sneakers, to stay safe on the uneven paths.

*Vernazza to Manorola is closed and rest are open.*



The Cinque Terre has a jagged profile along the five miles of rocky coastline enclosed by two headlands. Outcrops of rock overlooking the sea, small coves, bays, gorges, beaches between the rocks are the feature, a unique landscape with crystal clear sea. In Monterosso is the most famous beach, the sand with umbrellas and sunbeds and classic, with a pebbly shore. However, the beaches are of pebbles and stones in Corniglia and Riomaggiore. Also there are beaches are of stones in Vernazza and Manarola. You can find famous beach between Corniglia and Vernazza called "Guvano" for nudist.

Portofino Overview:

Portofino, Italy, is known as the resort of the rich and famous, but there is much more to see here than just people.

Santa Margherita Ligure and Camogli, seaside towns also worth visiting, are the nearest towns.

Transportation to Portofino:

Frequent ferries go to Portofino from Santa Margherita Ligure, Rapallo, and Camogli, from late spring through early fall. You can also go by boat from Genoa or other riviera towns to the south. The closest train stations are Santa Margherita Ligure and Camogli. A bus leaves for Portofino just outside the Santa Margherita station.

Castello Brown:

Castello Brown sits on a hill above the village. You can reach the castle by a path near the Botanic Garden.

San Giorgio Church and Lighthouse:

In a panoramic position on the way to the castle, you can visit San Giorgio Church, rebuilt after the last war. Another scenic pathway takes you clear out to the lighthouse, faro, on Punta del Capo.

Also, you can visit San Fruttuoso Bay and try to see the sculpture of Christ of the Abyss. You can reach San Fruttuso only by sea. You can choose a public boat at reasonable price. If the money is not a problem, try to rent a small taxi boat. It's an unforgettable experience.

One eatery of note is Pizzeria El Portico. Located just around the corner from the central harbor, within range of its sights and sounds, this energetic family-run spot provides great food and gracious service.

Visit the lighthouse on Punta Portofino:

If you're up for a stroll that also includes some awesome views, then why not check out the ageing lighthouse on Punta Portofino? Starting from the southern end of the port, it'll take you around 15 minutes to walk there, but don't worry, the sights of the port will more than make up it! If on the off chance you get a little bored of looking at the pristine water below, you can turn the other way and drool over the jaw dropping mansions of the rich and famous, and maybe catch a glimpse of someone of the high fences.

Once you get there the views are breathtaking and the lighthouse is very quaint and well worth taking some photos with.

**Greece**

Athens

Acropolis Museum

Museum restaurant with a spectacular view to Acropolis

The Hellenic Parliament building

City centre - Syntagma Square---The most famous aspect of Syntagma is the changing of the guards by the Evzones in front of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

A beautiful drive to sounion

Temple of Poseidon--The Temple of Poseidon is only 70 kilometers (45 miles) southeast of Athens, Greece. It's a half-daytrip, traffic permitting.

Mount Lycabettus---For romantic evenings, gorgeous sunsets and an amazing panoramic view of Athens Visitors can also take the funicular, which departs from Ploutarchou and Aristippou Street.

Temple of Olympian Zeus--The Temple of Olympian Zeus is known as the largest temple in Greece . The temple stands today mostly as a reminder of Greek history, but only 15 of 104 huge columns remain -

Erechtheum--The Erechtheus or Erechtheion is a temple made from Pentelic marble. It’s located on the Acropolis, and it’s one of the legendary pieces of Greek architecture. The six draped female figures can be found here that support the entablature, which is the Erechtheum’s most defining feature

Plaka--One of the most popular tourist attractions in Athens is the Plaka District, which resides under the Acropolis and spreads out to Syntagma. This village is almost like an island within the city, and it’s the perfect way to experience authentic Greek culture.

The Parthenon--- is located on the Acropolis on a hill that overlooks Athens. the main attraction was a huge statue of Athena that was made out of chryselephantine also known as elephant ivory and gold -

Ancient Agora----Located to the northwest of the Acropolis, the ancient Agora of Athens was once a marketplace and civic center.

**Why  
Delphi in Greece  
is special**

Delphi was one of the ancient world's most sacred sites. It was famous for its oracle. Today, Delphi is a remarkable complex of historical ruins.

**Why  
Epidaurus  
in Greece is special**

The ancient Greek site of Epidaurus has a colossal amphitheatre (see photo). It is noted for its stunning symmetrical design, impressive acoustics, and remarkable condition.

**Why the  
Dionysus Theatre  
and Atticus Odeon  
in Athens are special**

Works of the ancient Greek playwrights Aeschylus, Aristophanes, Euripides and Sophocles premiered in the Dionysus Theatre located on the southern slope of the Acropolis. And, concerts were held in the younger and smaller Atticus Odeon, just 250 meters (300 yards) away.

**Why Olympia  
is special**

Olympia is the birthplace of the Olympic Games, long the athletic pride of Greece. Today, Olympia is an outstanding archaeological site.

**Why Meteora  
in Greece is special**

The isolated monasteries of Meteora in northern Greece are spectacularly perched on precipitous rock towers.

**http://www.hillmanwonders.com/z_share/g_redbox_16w16h.gifThe Meteora monasteries**

In the 16th century there were about 20 monastery rock-tower sites. Today only a handful remain. One of them, Saint Stephan, is a nunnery. Holly Trinity (Agia Triada) is the most photogenic monastery

**Why the  
Temple of Poseidon  
is special**

The Temple of Poseidon sits majestically on Cape Sounion, 60 meters (200 feet) above the Aegean Sea.

**Hadrian's Arch**

The triumphal arch lies on an ancient street that led from the old city of Athens to the new, Roman section, built by Hadrian. It was constructed by the Athenians in A.D. 131, in honor of their benefactor emperor. Two inscriptions are carved on the architrave, one on each side: the first, on the side towards the Acropolis reads "This is Athens, the ancient city of Theseus"; the second, on the other side, facing the new city reads "This is the city of Hadrian and not of Theseus".

Temple of Hephaestus

Strangely ignored by many lists of the best things to see in Athens, the Temple of Hephaestus is actually the best preserved of Athens’ ancient temples

**University of Athens on Panapistimiou Street**

There are hundreds of clothing shops on Ermou Street, Athinas, Aeolou and all around central Athens and what better way is there to get to know a city than by shopping for necessities?

http://www.athensguide.com/acropolis.html