

Title:

Venice, Italy - The Bird Lady

Word Count:

621

Summary:

Venice is an old and somewhat eccentric city in Italy. Built long ago on marshlands, I was surprised to find myself spending my first night in the city with the bird lady.

Keywords:

venice, italy, piazza san marco, glass shops, train station, rent a room, europe, alfred hitchcock

Article Body:

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Rent a Room

As is common with many cities in Europe, one can rent a room in a private home at the train station. The advantage of renting a room is you get to live with a family and the costs tend to be a lot cheaper than a hotel room. If you're lucky, the family will take a liking to you and haul you around to see the "real" city you are in.

I had just arrived in Venice on a train from Paris. It was late, I was tired and in no mood to be picky about lodging. As I walked up to the rent a room desk, I had two priorities: sleep and a shower.

The elderly lady at the desk smiled at me and we got down to business. Apparently, arriving in Venice around midnight in the middle of August wasn't a wise move. I was told most everything was sold out, but there were two rooms still open. The first was 45 minutes outside of the city while the second was just off Piazza San Marco, the central square you see in all the movies. I booked the San Marco room, given a map and off I went.

As it was late and I was tired, it never occurred to me to ask why a room so close to Piazza San Marco was open when everything else was taken. As I walked

through the very narrow streets of Venice, I was too tired to really care.

Following the map, I walked into the square and started heading toward the glass shops at the far end. The walk through the otherwise delightful square was a killer on my headache as the mini-orchestras dueled the night away. Reaching the end, I found the little alley indicated on the map and through I went into more winding little streets.

Eventually, I found the door and gave it a knock. Like a bad Monty Python movie, a little viewing slot opened, eyes looked at me and my backpack, the door opened and I was literally pulled inside. Before me stood a little older lady with wild hair. At this point, I started to understand why the room was available. Turns out I was wrong, as "Michelle" turned out to be very sane and nice.

Michelle gave me the run down on the house and her basic rules. She went into a long diatribe about keeping the doors closed because of something she didn't know the English word for. I kept nodding and we proceed to the door that would let us into the house proper.

Inside the door, the house took on an entirely new atmosphere. Michelle was a big fan of birds. She had little yellow birds, red birds, black birds and I swear a few humming birds. None of them were in cages. I had booked a room in an informal Aviary!

Fortunately, my room had been bird-proofed by keeping the door closed. As I lay in bed, however, I could hear chirping and wings flapping as the other guests flew around the rooms. Over the next two days, I never got use to opening the door and seeing birds whipping by or perched and staring at me. I imagine this is where Alfred Hitchcock picked up some of his ideas.

As far as I know, Michelle is still in Venice and still renting out rooms. If you're a bird enthusiast, just ask for the bird hotel at the train station in Venice.