



## Travel Stories by Amaru & Suzanne



### Romantic Venice!

by Amaru & Suzanne, Aug 24th 2007

Leaving Amsterdam we flew with Lufthansa to Munich and then we were supposed to change to another plane which would take us to Venice.

We were at the airport with plenty of time to spare (as always) but the plane was late and then it took forever before we took off. In Munich we were only supposed to have 40min before the next flight (yes, it's very tight but we didn't book this, we just booked a flight from Amsterdam to Venice with a change) so we were afraid that we would not make it.

As it turns out, we made it just in time (had to do some running), the plane took off and we flew over the Alps while being served some nice wine, mortadella, cheese and biscotti (all of this on a one hour flight....take advice from the Italian Airlines). On arrival in Venice we were a bit worried that our bags would not have made that short transfer... and we were right!



**Hotel Alex**  
The cute little place where we stayed



**Plenty of carnival masks**  
all over the city

We knew that our bags were still in Munich, we made a claim for them but were told that there were no more flights from Munich to Venice until the next day. So we were told that the bags were going to be delivered to our hotel and were then given an overnight bag each, containing a t-shirt, shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrush and a few more items. (our bags did get back to us late the very next day and were also delivered to our hotel so we're ok now).

With nothing else to do we caught the bus into the small island that is Venice.... at least we didn't have to lug our backpacks around the small narrow streets of Venice trying to find our hotel.

Our hotel was located in the San Polo area and it takes around 10min to walk to from the train station.... if you can find the way that is.

Venice is known for its narrow, winding small streets and no matter how good you are at reading maps, you will get lost! And that's one of the things that makes Venice so special. We actually bought a small map that contained all the street of Venice.... and still, somehow we managed to get lost =)

We stayed at a small 1 star hotel named "Albergo Alex", on arrival we were greeted by a very sweet old lady and were shown to our rooms. Since Venice is SUCH an expensive place we opted for a single room with an extra bed just to cut down on some of the costs. The room turned out to be quite small but very cozy. We had our own room but had to share bathroom and shower with three other rooms on that floor, and during the three nights we stayed there we never had any problems with it.



**Lots of good**  
fresh fruit



**0.50€ for a slice of coconut**  
How can I resist =)

Strolling around in Venice is just great, you don't have to worry about cars, bikes or motorcycles running you over as in some of the other Italian cities (we're thinking Rome here) since there are no roads. Everything is just small narrow alleys for pedestrians, and sometimes they get so narrow that you can barely pass another person.

We made our way down towards Ponte di Rialto (the Rialto Bridge), connecting the San Polo with the San Marco area and along the way we saw lots and lots of souvenir stands, some of them tacky and some of them very nice, such as carnival masks and Venetian glass.

As we got closer to the Rialto Bridge we also found a few stands that were selling fresh fruits of all different varieties, we grabbed a slice of coconut and some berries in a cup for a snack.

After passing all these stalls with souvenirs we made it to the bridge which offers a great view over the Grand Canal (the Grand Canal is the big canal that flows all through Venice, you then have hundreds of tiny small canals that bypass the whole city).

We stayed on top of the bridge for a while just gazing our over the city until we eventually figured out that we were quite hungry, so we decided to find a place for dinner.

Now, Italy is a very expensive city to eat out in and Venice must be THE most expensive city in the country. We passed a lot of different restaurants but dismissed them due to the high price, come on, 20€ for a "Primo piatto" (first course), that's a bit steep.



**Didn't have the chilies**  
But they do look tasty



**My first espresso in Italy**  
One of many to come

Eventually we settled for a place closer to our hotel, we both had a pasta dish each as a "Primo piatto", some veal and calamaries for "Secondo piatto" (second course) together with some of the house's red wine. None too fancy but we quite enjoyed it!

Since we had spent most of our day either flying or in the airport we were too tired to do anything after dinner so we just went back to the hotel and had an early night.

On our second day we went down to the train station, purchased our tickets to Florence a few days in advance (just to be on the safe side) and then boarded the "Vaporetto" (water bus). This is a great way to see parts of Venice that you can't see while walking and we decided to take the "Vaporetto" down to Piazza San Marco.

The "Vaporetto" rides down along the Grand Canal and stops every so often at designated stops, just like a regular bus. It also crosses the canal and stops on both sides, during these times it's quite interesting to see how they manage not to hit the hundreds of gondolas that are out and about.

We probably would have been able to walk faster from our hotel down to Piazza San Marco, but this way we got to see some amazing buildings along the canal that we would not have been able to see otherwise.

Piazza San Marco is one of those landmarks that people often think of when Venice is mentioned. And you understand why since it's a great square with some fabulous monuments surrounding it. You have the Basilica di San Marco, the Palazzo Ducale and the Campanile (the bell tower).



**Some pasta for dinner...**  
We are after all in Italy



**We found a small  
Police boat**

And of course you have all the thousands and thousands of pigeons...

There are lots of small stands selling corn for 1€ so that you can feed the pigeons and everybody does it, they keep the corn in their hands and get the birds to feed from them while they take a few photos.

And sure, it looks really nice but Suz and I had read a few cases of people doing this and then eating afterwards, well....let's just say that pigeons aren't very clean birds and they can transfer some nasty diseases to you.

We bought some corn as well to give them, but made sure we didn't touch them at all!

One of the best things in Venice was the fact that you can get many small snacks during the day and they are all quite cheap, a focaccia here, a slice of pizza there, some fresh fruits, a cold beer, a great coffee (Italians sure know how to make them) and of course quite a lot of gelato!!

We did all of these things during our days here (well, I did the coffee and beer), that way we didn't feel like we had to do a big restaurant meal every day.

The remaining days we pretty much just followed this schedule, we got up around 9am, got some nice breakfast (included at our hotel), strolled for a hours with a snack or two for lunch and then we went back to the hotel to rest, siesta.



**Suz looking out over the canal  
from the Rialto Bridge**

In the afternoon we strolled some more and had a few more snacks..... can't really complain huh?



**Chiesa di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari  
Just next to our hotel**

On our last day we went to the top of the Campanile for some aerial views over the city. And it sure offers some great views, you can literally see the whole city from up there. We even got to see a huge passenger ferry being towed out of the city. That ferry was almost bigger than the island across from the square...

And while we were there all of a sudden the big bells that were located about 2m from our heads started ringing..... loud to say the least. Interesting enough they seemed to ring every 10min or so....during the time we were up there we had to cover our ears on about three occasions....

So what did we think about our stay in Venice?  
We absolutely loved it!!

It's old and rustic with some great narrow passageways, you can walk all over the city, there is no pollution from cars and motorcycles and you don't have to dodge traffic. The canals are very pretty with some beautiful houses lining up along them. Sure it might be touristic, it might be expensive.... but in the end, it's all worth it!



**We're riding the Vaporetto (water bus)  
Down the Grand Canal**



**The gondolas are everywhere  
Some close calls occasionally**



**Enjoying the sun**  
aboard the Vaporetto



**Gondola rush hour**  
I wonder who has right of way?



**Palazzo Ducale**  
Quite an impressive building



**Walking towards**  
Piazza San Marco



**Basilica di San Marco**  
In the centre of the square



**Suz and I**  
and thousands of pigeons



**Feeding the pigeons**  
But not touching them



**Suz and the pigeons**  
trying not to get attacked



**Suz and I**  
at Piazza San Marco



**A great slice of pizza**  
at least as good as Joe's =)



**Some fresh fruit anyone?**  
at 1.50€ who wouldn't want some?



**The Rialto Bridge**  
The most famous bridge in Venice



**Looking out over the Grand Canal**  
standing next to the bridge



**A gondola parking place**  
In a very good location



**Suz and I**  
On top of the Rialto Bridge



**Suz**  
and some carnive masks



Looking out over  
Fondazione Giorgio Cini



Same location  
closer to sunset



Chiesa de Santa Maria della Salute  
can be seen in the background



Piazza San Marco  
during a different light



A leaning tower  
...and we're not even in Pisa yet =)



Canals and more canals  
And plenty of Gondolas in them



Now that's a pizza  
With plenty of Prosciutto on it



Gelato...  
We'll see plenty of these



**Suz snacking on  
some fresh fruits**



**Masks all over the place  
We felt like getting a few**



**Suz in front of a  
Venetian glass store**



**Most canals  
are just gorgeous**



**The market  
at the Rialto Bridge**



**Can you spot the tower  
in the background?**



**On top of the Campanille  
The Bell Tower at the square**



**Overlooking Venice  
from above**



A good view  
from up here



That's the  
Fondazione Giorgio Cini again



Looking over the  
Basilica di San Marco



Suz  
and Venice!



Piazza San Marco  
at dusk



Like we said  
...we love gelato!

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