

HELEN AND DAVID'S SLOW SERENISSIMA RENDEZVOUS

This example has been created to demonstrate the Slow Serenissima process

ABOUT YOUR VISIT

Your names

Helen and David Mercer

Who will be travelling?

Just the two of us.

When are you visiting Venice?

Five nights in the second half of September. We arrive on a Monday afternoon and leave on Saturday morning.

Where will you be staying?

In a hotel close to Campo Santa Maria Formosa.

Is this your first visit to Venice?

Yes, for both of us. We have been to other parts of Italy, but somehow never Venice.

Which day of your visit are you considering for Slow Serenissima?

Probably our first full day, although we would be happy to take advice about whether the second day would be better. We would like to feel that we have begun to understand the city quite early in the holiday.

Have you already made any bookings?

We are thinking of booking the Doge's Palace, but have not done so yet. We would like to visit the Basilica. Nothing else is fixed.

We have talked about having a gondola ride at some point, that might be overly touristy, but think we will regret it if we dismiss it simply for that reason.

PACE, ENERGY AND PRACTICAL PREFERENCES

How would you describe your preferred pace?

We like to wander and look around. We are happy to walk and explore, but do not want to march from sight to sight.

We would rather experience fewer places properly than reach the end of the day unable to remember any of them.

How long would you usually enjoy walking before pausing?

Approximately an hour. We enjoy stopping for coffee and watching what is happening around us.

Is there anything we should consider regarding mobility, stamina or access?

David sometimes finds repeated steps tiring because of an old knee injury, but he does not normally use a walking aid. A great many bridges in quick succession might be uncomfortable.

Helen is a confident walker but dislikes feeling rushed.

What time would you realistically enjoy beginning the day?

Around 8.00 or 8.30 a.m. We could begin slightly earlier for a particularly good reason, but we are not naturally early birds.

How structured would you like the day to feel?

We would like a clear shape and enough practical guidance to stop us constantly consulting our phones. However, we would not want every half-hour allocated.

How do you feel about using the vaporetto?

Very happy to use it. In fact, being on the water is one of the things we are looking forward to. We'll have tickets for at least 3 days.

FOOD AND PAUSES

What kind of food experiences appeal to you?

Informal ones. Coffee and pastries, looking forward to cicchetti, tramezzini, gelato and perhaps a glass of spritz somewhere atmospheric.

We are not looking for a formal restaurant recommendations.

Do you have dietary requirements or strong preferences?

Helen is mostly vegetarian but eats fish occasionally. David eats almost anything. Neither of us has an allergy.

What makes a good pause for you?

A place where we can sit, look around and feel part of the city for a while. A beautiful view would be lovely, but we also like ordinary neighbourhood cafés where people come and go.

YOUR VENICE

What first made you want to visit Venice?

Helen: Books, probably. Venice has always seemed half-real to me because I encountered it in stories before thinking of it as somewhere I might actually visit.

David: The physical improbability of it. I want to understand how a city built around poles in the water looks and works when you are actually inside it.

Joint answer: We have also reached the stage when we do not want to keep saying, “We must go to Venice one day.”

Have you read, watched or listened to anything connected with Venice?

Helen has read several of Donna Leon’s Brunetti novels and *Miss Garnet’s Angel*. She likes the feeling of people living ordinary lives in an extraordinary city. She has also seen *Summertime*, although many years ago.

David has watched *Casino Royale* and remembers Venice from various television programmes, but is less interested in following film locations precisely.

We both know Vivaldi’s *Four Seasons*, although we would not describe ourselves as especially knowledgeable about classical music.

Has anyone recommended a place or experience to you?

Friends have said that we must see Piazza San Marco and it can be very crowded. Someone else told us simply to put the map away and get lost.

We have also been told to visit Murano, Burano and Torcello, but we are unsure whether trying to see all three would be too much. That may be for another day.

Which three places or experiences currently feel most important?

1. Piazza San Marco and the Basilica
2. The Rialto Bridge and seeing the Grand Canal
3. Wandering through quieter back streets and finding a Venice that feels lived in

Helen would also like some connection with Donna Leon’s Venice, although she does not necessarily want a formal Brunetti-location tour.

Are there other places you would be pleased to encounter if they fitted naturally?

A beautiful church that we might otherwise overlook.

Somewhere connected with Vivaldi.

A palazzo interior, courtyard or garden.

The Arsenale sounds interesting to David, although neither of us is certain exactly what there is to see there.

Helen wonders whether anything from *Miss Garnet’s Angel* might fit, but does not want the day distorted to include it.

We would be interested in something connected with the Biennale.

Which aspects of Venice draw you most?

Helen:

- literature and writers;
- churches and sacred spaces;
- everyday Venetian life;
- quiet streets and wandering;
- art, provided it is not an exhausting succession of galleries;
- informal food and pausing for a coffee.

David:

- architecture;
- the relationship between buildings and water;
- how Venice functions as a city;
- boats and the lagoon;
- craftsmanship;
- the Arsenale;
- quieter streets where architectural details are easier to notice.

Both:

- experiencing the city from the water;
- places with atmosphere;
- seeing 'famous' Venice without spending the whole day in a crowd.

Which sounds most like your ideal way of exploring?

Probably combining one important visit with quieter discoveries.

We also like the idea of following a story or theme, provided it does not make us feel that we are on an educational trail with tasks to complete.

How do you feel about churches, museums and other interiors?

We would enjoy one significant interior and perhaps one shorter, quieter church visit.

We do not want to spend most of a fine day indoors. If it rains, we would be happy to adapt.

How do you feel about crowds and queues?

Neither of us enjoys them, but we understand that famous Venice will be busy. We are willing to queue briefly for something exceptional.

We would prefer not to spend a large part of the day waiting or moving in a dense crowd.

Is there anything you actively do not want the day to become?

A checklist.

A history lecture.

A forced march.

A succession of expensive refreshments.

A day so carefully planned that we worry about being late for each stage.

We would also rather not spend the whole time photographing things. We want to remember being there.

Is there a particular feeling you would like the day to have?

Helen: Literary, atmospheric and beautiful without being grand all the time.

David: Interesting and surprising. I would like to understand something about Venice that I did not know before.

Joint answer: We would like a sense of gradually discovering the city rather than having it presented to us all at once.

When you look back on your visit, what do you most hope you will remember?

The light on the water, the sound of the city and one or two places that feel as though they became ours for a little while.

We would like to remember an unhurried conversation over coffee or wine, and the moment when we realised we had stopped worrying about where we were going.

Are there wishes that belong particularly to one of you?

Helen would appreciate a literary connection chosen especially for her. She loved Brunetti, Donna Leon's detective.

David would enjoy a place or detail that helps him understand how Venice is constructed and sustained.

We would each like the other person to have a moment that feels particularly theirs.

What have we not asked that might help us create your Venice?

We are slightly worried about "doing Venice wrongly." There is so much that people say is essential, and we know we cannot see everything.

We would welcome permission to leave things out.

We are also curious about whether evenings in Venice feel very different from the daytime. If an evening would be better as a separate extension, we would be interested in hearing about that.