

# INSIGHTS INTO A SLOW SERENISSIMA RENDEZVOUS

## MY MEETING WITH HELEN AND DAVID

### Exploring dreams & ideas to create a special day

When I met Helen and David on Zoom for their Slow Serenissima rendezvous, they already had several ideas about how they wanted to spend their time in Venice. They had a Venice built in their imaginations from movies, novels set in Venice and travel websites.

Their *'must dos'* included Piazza San Marco, the Cathedral, the Campanile and the Doge's Palace the Bridge of Sighs, and of course, and the Rialto Bridge.

Early in the conversation Helen mentioned Donna Leon's novels and she'd read them all. The music of Vivaldi, especially Vivaldi's Gloria and The Four Seasons always made her imagine the Venetian lagoon.

David had always had curiosity about how a city of palazzi and tall buildings could be built on poles driven into the seabed. How had the intricate maze of canals and bridges built in ancient times to join many tiny islands together to form a city. He also finds the collection of water in large cisterns under a campo fascinating.

They also knew what they did not want. They did not want to hurry through a list of essential sights, spend hours in queues or reach the evening with photographs of places they could barely remember seeing. They had chosen to stay in the heart of the city to see as much of the real Venice as possible.

Early in the conversation Helen described her interest in the author Donna Leon who writes about a Venetian detective as what had made her want to visit Venice. She loved the insight into family life in a timeless Venice circa the early years of this century.

As we talked, something more particular emerged. She did not want a tour of Commisario Brunetti book locations. What she loved from the novels was the sense of ordinary Venetian life continuing behind the beautiful façades: families eating together, people crossing the city for work and familiar neighbourhood Campos becoming part of community life.

David's interest in architecture also proved less formal than it had sounded on their questionnaire. Dates and architectural terminology held little appeal. He wanted to notice how buildings met the water, how goods and people moved through the city and how Venice continued to function despite its apparent impossibility!

He had read about shipbuilding in the Venetian Republic. Was it true that at the height of the Republic the Arsenale could produce nearly one complete warship (galley) per day?

I discovered Helen had a fascination for the different characters of the Venetian Sestieres, and we chatted about that quite a lot in our conversation.

Piazza San Marco mattered to them both, but not because they wanted to see a compulsory landmark. For them walking into St. Mark's Square was the moment they looked forward to most.

I could see that this would be the moment when Venice would become real to them. They wanted to stand in the Piazza, see the Basilica and feel that they had finally arrived in a city they had imagined for years.

The most revealing part of our conversation came when I asked how they would know the experience had worked well for them.

Helen's hopes were for a day she would always remember, not the main sites, but a city created by people escaping from fear and forming a civilization in such difficult terrain. She knew about the island of Torcello as the first place that people had found refuge in the lagoon.

David said he wanted to return home knowing a Venice that he could not have found from following a guidebook.

Together, they wanted to remember the light, the sound of water and use our Slow Serenissima Service to inspire them to visit and take pauses in places which they might have found themselves.

These answers, which came out of conversation in our online rendezvous formed the essence of their Venetian Vista and the starting point for the compilation of the itinerary for their Slow Serenissima day.

*Ruth*

*Helen and David are fictional clients created to illustrate the Slow Serenissima process. Every rendezvous and portfolio will follow the interests and character of the people for whom it is created.*