Storm over Venice

Rain, Thunder, Lightning and Pizza (on the Giudecca Canal)



REFLECTIONS ON VENICE
SEP 06, 2026

Storm on the Zattere

Rain, Thunder, Lightning and Pizza

Follow our Timeline:

6:30pm – Our last evening in Venice

We'd had a busy day starting at Ca' Rezzonica, wandering around San Barnaba parish, on to the Biennale Gardens and the Royal Gardens. It was hot, but the weather forecast had changed to no rain expected, so we didn't think there was a chance of a storm.

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We had finished at the wondrous Garden of the Redeemer at the Redentore on Giudecca, and there will be much more to follow on that garden in future articles. It is our new favorite place.

We had an hour before dinner, and decided to go in search of a bottle of cloudy or *Col prosecco*, and a shop close to Campo Saint Raphael might have it, as it stocked only local wines.

> An Aside: “Col Fondo (”with the bottom”) is the original, traditional style of Prosecco. Long before the invention of modern steel tanks, winemakers in the Veneto region crafted sparkling wine by letting it ferment directly inside the bottle, leaving the yeast sediment behind.
>
> Today, Prosecco is crystal-clear, but Col Fondo offers a rustic change, it looks cloudy and tastes very dry. Because the wine is fermented in the bottle the spent yeast cells are never removed, giving it a hazy appearance.
>
> It is often sealed with a simple cap (like a beer bottle) rather than a sparkling wine cork with wire.”

We’ve had it a couple of times in the past, and find it hard to locate. This time we had a lead …

6:37pm – Lightning over Marghera and first drops of rain on Zattere

We’d already changed in case we didn’t return to the hotel.

> An Aside: We’d moved hotel (I’m becoming quite the advocate of the 2-centre vacation in Venice! This time because we’d booked at short notice and our usual Pensione was full. I’ll give the top floor of Residence 818 on the Zattere *a shout out* here. There is a fantastic view as long as you are up for walking up a lot of stairs.

We walked towards San Basilio and as we approached the first drops of rain began to fall. The sky looked clear, with the main storm in the distance out towards Marghera.

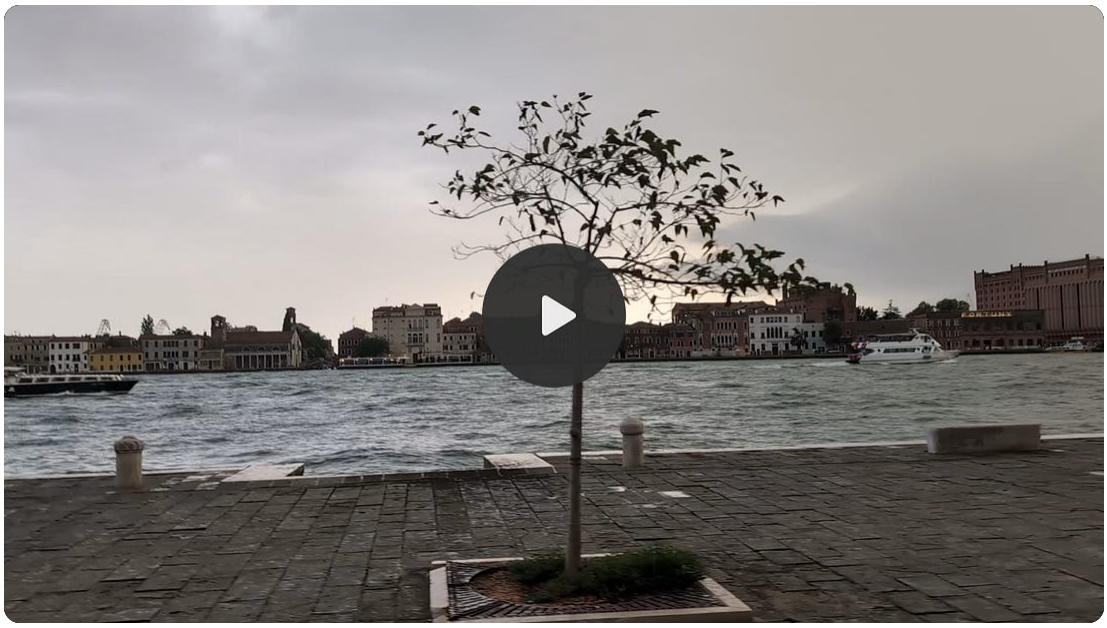
We carried on towards San Basilio on our quest to find the shop selling Col Fondo prosecco. The rain got more persistent. Quite a few drops. My raincoat and umbrella were in the car at Fusina, we'd taken most of our baggage over there the previous day, knowing there were a lot of steps to climb at the Residenza.

Lightning flashed across the sky. Curiously both sheet and forked lightning together.



6:39 - Head back towards the hotel.

We decided to head back towards the Residenza as the rain got heavier, bigger drops falling more quickly. The lightning seemed much closer, almost directly above.



6:41 - Sheltering in Sotoportego Fiovarante

Suddenly the storm picked up pace.

> Aside: “Imagine Rossini’s William Tell Overture where the quiet music fades and a famous brass section crescendo takes over (those of a certain age will know this as the theme to the black and white Lone Ranger children’s series.
>
> Storm in William tell OvertureHere’s a link for anyone interested in a soundscape to this storm!). The music does depict a storm in fact, so it works well here where the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra give the Finale full throttle.

Storm in William Tell Overture

“Let’s shelter,” I suggested. For once Nigel didn’t disagree. He tends to ignore the weather (those who have played soccer in the North of England tend to be hardy in adverse weather).

The rain was too heavy to make it over the Ponte Longo bridge so we took shelter in Sotoportego Fiovarante.

“The weather changed, the rain came, the wind blew, and the beautiful autumn gave way to a violent, dark storm. Venice, with her canals and her palaces, seemed to shiver under the cold blast.” Henry James The Wings of the Dove (1901)

We looked across Rio San Trovaso to see customers from bars on the Zattere sheltering under the portico outside the Lo Studio art gallery (not as wide as ours) and from Osteria Ai Squero squeezed together under a small canopy.

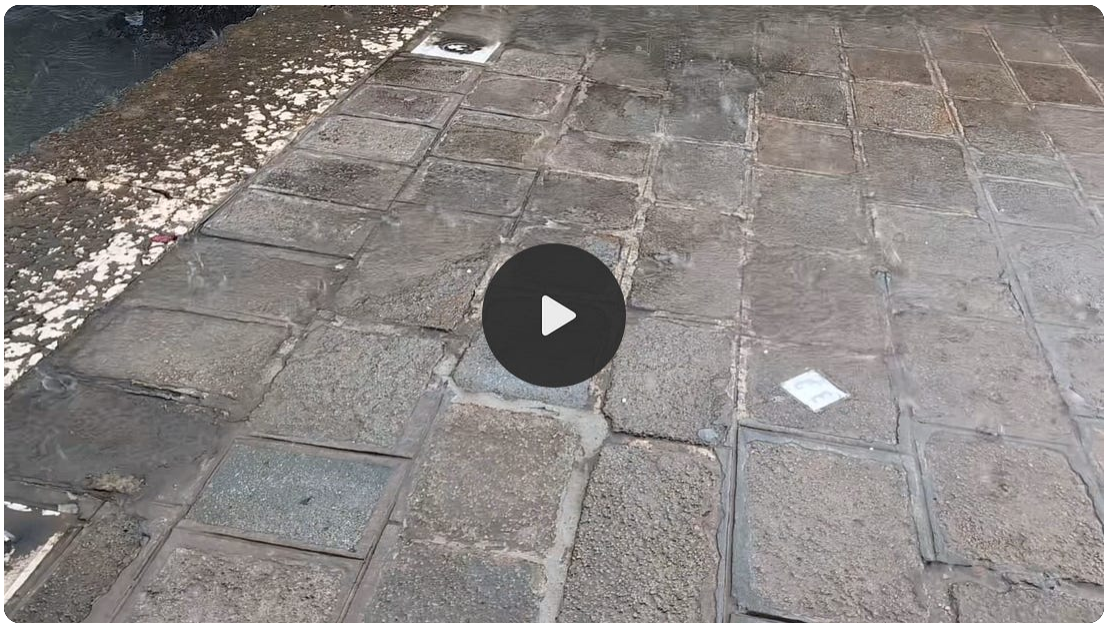
At one point the water started to move towards us, but the drainage in the sotoportega was good and we just moved further up. The other side of the canal was a different matter. We could see the water rising and the wind blowing water onto those sheltering.

A little boy was dancing in the rain.

Every so often a Venetian who must have finished work and be walking home, or to a boat, strode past with determination.

The rain turned to hail. I remember that means we are in the centre of the storm. A storm which wasn’t supposed to happen. The wind speed increased considerably driving us even further under the stone covering. There was no hope for those sheltering on the other side of the canal. They were drenched. There was little shelter.

Hailstones larger than peas, more the size of a borlotti bean pelted the walkway, sploshing into the San Trovaso Canal.



This storm raged for about 20 minutes. Blue sky re-appeared. The storm had gone.

7:10 – Clear skies in time for 7:16 no 2 to Palanca.

We had a reservation for pizza at 19:15, but we weren't going to make. No time to return to the Residenza. We decided to take the bus boat (vaporetto) to Palanca on Giuidecca anyway. We could see the restaurant across the canal, and it looked quiet.

7:25 – At the Ostaria Ae Botti

We expected to be inside, but the staff were wiping down tables and brushing water away to serve outside.

Some customers were already eating inside, but as no more rain was forecast and the weather was still warm, we were happy to wait 5 minutes to have our meal outside.

I love that view across the canal and wanted to see the lights sparkling on our last evening. We were seated at the table by 7:45 pm (19:45 hrs). We splashed out and had a starter, after that rainstorm we felt extravagant!





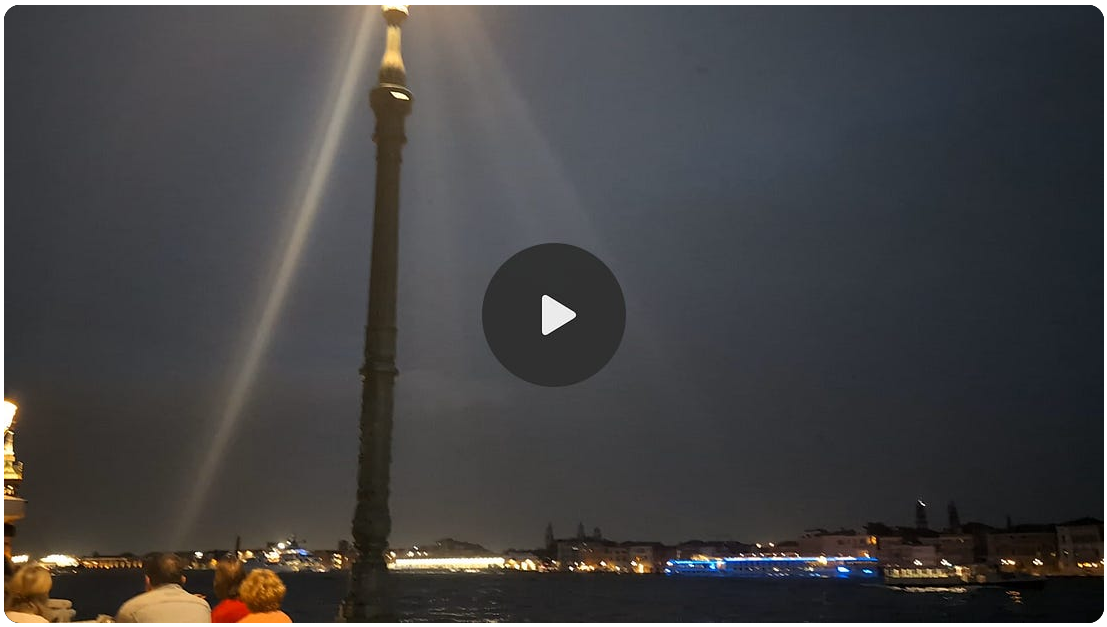


Darkness falls as we get our pizza’s but lightening and dark clouds approach again although there is an almost full moon in the other direction.



Twilight, then darkness falls as our pizzas arrived. We looked around and there were only two tables with customers eating outside.

8:25 - Storm clouds? Surely not?



As the storm approaches, you can see everything being gathered in by restaurant (forecast wrong again!) so we settle our bill, just in time to get the approaching number 2 vaporetto back to the Zattere.

"We were overtaken by a heavy Squall, and the Gondola put in peril – hats blown away, boat filling, oar lost, tumbling sea, thunder, rain in torrents, night coming and wind increasing."

The Historical Letter: Lord Byron (August 1819)

The first drops of rain are starting to fall as we reach the hotel and climb those stairs.

10 minutes later you can see the view from our window!



What a finale to our stay in Venice. We love our Pensione and will return, as we're known and welcomed there and the garden is a delight, but we were glad to be high up, looking over the Giudecca Canal at the storm.

It was quite an evening.

And just like the storm in Rossini's William Tell Overture all was quiet the next morning, and as we prepared to leave we caught sight of this Clipper, a sailing vessel being towed by tugs along the canal.

The giant cruise boats are no longer allowed up the canal, but smaller vessels like this can still dock at San Basilio.



Arrivederci

We hope you enjoyed this story about an unexpected change of plan for our evening in Dorsoduro Venice. The storm was quite spectacular.

We're doing an ad hoc feature on Cinematic Locations, inspired by the film festival next time.

I can share an evening with a similar storm in 2005 as we watched the cast of Casanova arrive at the Doge's Place for their after-screening party. Equally dramatic – and we stumbled across this scene unexpectedly.

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