

Presentation of Venice: a great civilization

Guidelines to know and to enjoy the real and sound Venice: a short study visit

By Prof. Romano Toppan
Philosopher and writer on Travel and Hospitality
University of Verona

Script

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Welcome to all the participants to the study visit of Venice: I am pleased to address a short speech of presentation of this city, just to be aware of its greatness and its glorious history and note some unknown traits of its originality.

As you know, we have in the travels very many starts and departures, but very few arrivals: many don't come ever to a destination, because, Seneca Said, "they make the worst error; they bring with them themselves". This is the reason why I believe that it is necessary to introduce you all to the multifaceted and surprising personality of Venice, taking into consideration that I am a philosopher and anthropologist of the travel and history, not a tourist guide.

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To come to Venice means to enter into a city world, which encompasses the footprint of the East and West, of Rome and Greece, of the feelings of Christianity and the respect for Islam, a town which loved always a steady approach to the freedom, cross-cultural vision and pragmatic tolerance.

Therefore, our travel and arrival to Venice can be transformed in cultural experience and enlarge our horizons.

É I draw your attention to some pillars of the Venice profile and identity : we have no time for the usual view and Venice doesn't deserve such superficial approach

É We must choose what represents the "core" facets of Venice

É Travel must be "experienced": the Indo-European linguistic root of all the words concerning "travel" lead to the meaning of the experience and intelligence, which "shape" the human essence (πολυτροπος)

É Your dignity and prestige wants a creative glance on the greatness and nobility of Venice and its history

The linguistic root of the Indo-European languages is "PER/PARA"

From this root we have:

É Greek: περι-αίνω = going away, walking

É Latin: per-ire = going through, passing through

É Gothic: far-an (p becomes f in the gothic languages, like pater/vater,father) = going away

From the "movement" the human being achieves intelligence and competence:

É Ex-per-ientia – ex-per-ience – Er-fahr-ung

But, to achieve knowledge and competence the human being must face a “risk”, must be available to change, to leave the “usual” looking for new things :

É Per-iculum – per-il – Ge-fahr : all come from the same root

We cannot join an experience without a risk: travel (to fare, fahren, per-ire) means difficulty, the same root of travail, trabajo, trabalho, travaglio.

The reason why our travel must be a metamorphosis, a change, an innovation, is hidden in the linguistic roots of the words we use for all is concerning travel, going away

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Venice is a window on the best practices of the civilization, where to look for the prosperity of our country, the well-being of our citizens: Venice, before the American Constitution, aimed at the happiness of its citizens.

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Venice is original

É After the fall of the roman empire, Venice was the only political and social experience of “continuity”

É Venice kept the competencies of the Romans in the key sectors: governance (republic), know how for building, crafts, ships and trading

É The secret of the roman empire was the self-esteem of its citizens: they perceived themselves as the best, Rome as town-world

É Venice perceived itself as “Serenissima”, the most serene, a town world

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A cosmopolitan civilization

É The cosmopolitan approach to the International relationships was retrieved from the ðGreek cultureö: foreign (xenos) was considered ðguestö, according to a ðwelcome societyö

É Some examples in the Greek history: Herodotus said that Polycrates concluded a “xenia” with Amasis and exchanged presents between them:

É *xenien sunethékato pempôn dora kai dekomenos allà par’ekeinou*

(ξενιεν συνεθηκατο πεμπων δωρα και δεκομενος αλλα παρ’εκεινου)

É According Sofocles, Oedipus calls Theseus: *philtate xenon* (the most loved foreign/guest-φιλτατε ξενων)

É *ξενος τινη*. the correct translation is “to be guest of someone” (and not: to be stranger for someone)

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1.100 Years of original history

É The Republic of Venice was founded in 697 b.C. and fell down in 1797 b.C.: no other experience had such continuity in Europe, perhaps in the world. For example the Byzantine

Empire is considered the longest experience of “continuity” in the role of “state”: but it has a duration of 43 years less than the Venice autonomy and independence

- É Sea was our land: **no imperium, but emporium**, no territorial power in extension and quantity, but network in profitability and quality
- É A modern example of “lean organization” and innovative civilization

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Main components of the real vision of Venice

- É Freedom: Venice rises from a deed, an action, a decision of the roman and venetic communities for freedom, escaping from the disgusting oppression and barbarian invaders
- É Vision: the most serene republic (happiness policy)
- É Governance: the unique republic in its times and citizens involvement (citizens, not subjects)
- É Elective roles: all the trials to modify the constitution in favour of hereditary dynasty, were cut off
- É No feudalism: the state before everything and everyone

Freedom: all the Romans who fell under the domination of the barbarian invaders lost their freedom and their wealth was severely reduced at the level of the 5° century before Christ : to join the same level of prosperity and pro capita wealth of the 3° and 4° century, before the decline, European had to wait until 12° century, that’s more than 800 years.

Venice was the first community in the Western Europe to join the prosperity, thanks to the “memory” of the roman empire competencies and the relationship with byzantine empire of the Eastern Europe and with Arabians’ high civilization of the Middle East.

The most serene republic would be the most appropriate definition of the “happiness economy” proposed by the Nobel Prize Daniel Kahneman.

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- É **Human rights:** the power of the Inquisition against the heretics, the treatment of the Jews and other minorities, the rules for the immigration, the forms of welfare (public and private), the treatment of the poor people and diseased, the parity of the women
- É **Hospital and cosmopolitan civilization**, open to the diversity and cross-cultural approach
- É **The bureaucracy:** rigorous and responsible
- É **The environment’s management**
- É **The advanced health organization**

Do you know that Venice, according to the Economic Studies of OECD¹, for 3 centuries was the first in the ranking similar to present G8 ?:

For 3 centuries was the first in G8

- É Fernand Braudel² defined the wealth of the nations as a “mobile home”, which moves now here, now there (for many of us always elsewhere!)
- É Braudel claims that there are long-term cycles in the capitalist economy which developed in Europe in the 12^o century. Cities and later nation-states follow each other subsequently as centres of these cycles.
- É Venice in 13th to 15th century (1250-1510)
- É Antwerpen in 16th (1510-1569)
- É Amsterdam in 16th to 18th (1570-1733)
- É London and England in 18th and 19th (1733-1896)
- É New York and United States (1896-2001)
- É Shanghai (2001 -)
- É “When Venice – he wrote – was the leading economic centre in the world, Manhattan was not more than a field of potatoes”

John Ruskin loved Venice

“A ghost upon the sands of the sea, so weak – so quiet – so bereft of all but her loveliness, that we might well doubt, as we watched her faint reflection in the mirage of the lagoon, which was the City and which the Shadow”

The Stones of Venice

- É Rejection of mechanization and standardization also informed Ruskin's theories of architecture, and his emphasis on the importance of the Medieval Gothic style. He praised the Gothic style for what he saw as its reverence for nature and natural forms; the free, unfettered expression of artisans constructing and decorating buildings; and for the organic relationship he posited between worker and guild, worker and community, worker and natural environment, and between worker and God. Venice was exactly what he dreamed.
- É For Ruskin, creating true Gothic architecture involved the whole community, and expressed the full range of human emotions.
- É Even its crude and "savage" aspects were proof of "the liberty of every workman who struck the stone; a freedom of thought, and rank in scale of being, such as no laws, no charters, no charities can secure."
- É In *The Stones of Venice*, the previously mentioned chapter "The Nature of Gothic" attacked the [division of labor](#), which [Adam Smith](#) advocated in the early books of *The Wealth of Nations*. Ruskin believed the division of labor to be the main cause of the unhappiness of the poor.

¹ Angus Maddison (born in Newcastle, UK, as Professor at the Groningen University and Honorary Fellow at the Selwyn College of Cambridge. I 1971 was nominated Chief of the Analysis Division for seven years. He created many comparison tables between the GDP of many countries and worldwide areas of the last 2.000 years: in his tables, Venice is considered one of the richest nation or state in the history so far.

² Braudel F. *La Dynamique du capitalisme*, éd. Arthaud, Paris. According Braudel, Venice had the most durable cycle of wealth. There is a boutade f Braudel about this statement: when Venice was the financial centre of the world, Manhattan was only a field of potatoes (just to stress the concept of the wealth as mobile home)..

Ruskin argued that the rich had never been so generous in the past, but the poor's hatred of the rich was at its greatest point. This was because the poor were now unsatisfied by monotonous work that used them as a tool, instead of a person. These ideas later influenced [William Morris](#).

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The governance of Venice: a Republic founded on “citizens”:

- É Petrarch, one of the greatest poets of Italy and founder, together with Dante and Boccaccio, of our Italian language, in a letter to a friend wrote this meaningful judgement about Venice governance:
- É *«Venice, unique hospital town in these days for the freedom, justice, peace, unique refuge of the good people and port where the ships of the men who are looking for a serene life can be gusted, after the storms of tyranny and wars everywhere in Europe; a town rich of gold, but much richer of dignity and fame, powerful in forces, but much more powerful in virtues, founded on steady and solid stones and marbles, but much more on solid civic grounds of its social cohesion, protected and surrounded by the sea, but much better fortified and ensured by the careful wisdom of its sons»*

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Venice: the political leadership and governance profile

The main institutions :

- É Serenissima Signoria The **Signoria of Venice** was the supreme body of government of the Republic of Venice. It was constituted of:
 - É the Doge (Duke? A bad translation)
 - É the Minor Council (*Minor Consiglio*), created in 1175, which was composed of the 6 advisors of the Doge.
 - É the 3 leaders of the Quarantia the supreme tribunal, created in 1179.
 - É College of the Wise Men (*Collegio dei Savi*) : Council of the Ministers
 - É Senate (*Consiglio dei Pregadi*)
 - É General Assembly of Patricians (*Consiglio Magior*): responsible of the election of the Doge and all the most important roles of the state

The Signoria was considered a very important body of government, more than the Doge himself. The sentence *si è morto il Doge, no la Signoria* (The Doge is dead, but the Signoria is living) was ritually said during the ceremonies set for the death of the Doge. Council of Ten or simply the **Ten**, was, from 1310 to 1797, one of the major governing bodies of the Republic of Venice. Although its actions were often secretive, it was generally considered to be fair and effective by the citizens of the Republic.

- É Curiosity: the origin of the expression “brogli elettorali” or corruption of elections (it comes from the venetian word “**brolo**”, that’s vegetable garden, which was placed in the area near Ducal Palace and where the “poor” patricians negotiated their votes in favour of the “rich” candidates in exchange of money or benefits).

Traits of the venetian leadership:

- É Independence from the clerical power
- É Pragmatic approach without any trace of fanaticism or dogmatism

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The Ducal Palace

- É It is the unique palace of power which is empty downstairs and full upstairs : people had access and the Senate had nothing to fear and there was a facility for citizens to submit written complaints at what was known as the *Bussola* chamber.
- É Senate was composed by a class of merchants, entrepreneurs and nobles, but not by feudal classes : Venice had no kings, no princes, no dukes, no earlies, no barons,
- É The Ducal Palace offices (with officers) were completely hidden, between the external façade and internal walls: a long and secret interstice, where all the officers ruled without external pressures : you can visit this secret power with a guide through the so called “itinerari segreti”
- É Venetian laws imposed that the names of the officers, who robbed public money, had to be published in legible list outside for ever, until their death

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The Arsenal

- É It was the biggest company of those days : it was organized with the same principles and systems of the modern kaizen (involving everyone in the organization, in the processes)
- É One ship was completely produced in 1 day
- É Nevertheless, the management of the forests for providing wood was ruled according to the sustainability criteria

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The management of the waters

- É Waters of lagoons, rivers, sea and lakes, forests, landscapes, urban setting, roads
- É Lagoon was very carefully protected : hard punishments were inflicted to people who caused damages
- É Rivers were diverted, in order to preserve the lagoon from tamping
- É Drinkable water was provided with an original system of wells, visible even today

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Venice: art, crafts and trades

- É The Schools : Great Schools (6) and Minor Schools (more than 200)
- É Also the foreign communities of immigrants, workers and craftsmen had their own “schools” and zones (Albanese, Greek, Dalmatian etc.)
- É Many streets and squares (calli and campielli) are devoted much more to crafts and labour than to the saints and famous men
- É They are represented on the capitals of the Duke Palace and portal of St. Mark
- É Murano cluster: modernity of the venetian economic policy

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The Schools

- É They were “confraternities” and charities (today mutual help associations and ong)
- É 6 of them were “Great Schools”: [Scuola Grande di San Teodoro \(1258\)](#), [Scuola Grande di Santa Maria della Carità\(1260\)](#), [Scuola Grande di San Marco\(1261\)](#), [Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista \(1261\)](#), [Scuola Grande di Santa Maria della Misericordia\(1308\)](#), [Scuola Grande di San Rocco\(1478\)](#)
- É 210 (or even more) were “Minor Schools” for the Crafts and Professions, with their rules, patron saint, see, church and board of directors
- É These “Schools” formed the basis of the “social capital” and social cohesion of the Republic, which recognized and praised them, especially those of labours and professions : all were invited to participate in honour place to the main ceremonies of the Republic and were represented on the central sites of the town, like Ducal Palace and St. Mark Portals

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Foreign and immigrants’ communities: the cosmopolitanism of the Serenissima is proved by many signs of its hospitality. Many sites of the city are devoted to representatives of foreign people, even the ònicest onesö:

- É Riva degli Schiavoni (Dalmatian and Slavoonic site)
- É Riva dei Ragusei (Ragusa, now Dobrovnica community site)
- É Fondaco dei Turchi (Turkish Trade Centre)
- É Fondaco dei Tedeschi (German Trade Centre)
- É Calle delle Turchette (Turkish women site)
- É Calle dei Tedeschi (German site)
- É Calle degli Albanesi (Albanese community site)
- É Ponte dei Greci (Greek Community site)
- É Sottoportego, corte e calle degli amai o amadi (a Bavarian family)

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Crafts and labour: they were honored and also for them city named streets, squares and sites

- É Crafts: Fuseri (weavers), Fabbri (blacksmiths), Frutarol (fruiterer), Cereri (wax-chandlers), Tintor (dyer), Pistor (baker), Corder (rope-maker), Tagiapiera (stonemason), Calegher (shoemaker), Cerchieri (hoop-makers)
- É Professions: Avvocati(Lawyers), Ponte delle tette (Tits’ or boobs’ bridge: Courtesans’ site),
- É Labour: Carbon (coal site), Olio (oil site), Vin (wine site), Lana (wool site), Masena(mill site), Squero (boatyard), Orti (vegetables site), Frezzerie (arrows’ site), Spadaria (swords’ site), Mercerie (clothes’ site), Fiuberia (buckles’ site), Pestrin (mill or milkman ?),

Our study tour is an example of the relevance and priority of the òlabourö in the history of the ancient Venice Republic.

Our walk will be through one of the multifaceted aspects of this civilization: the importance of the òlabourö, of the crafts, of the workers, is clear in Venice, because almost one third of the ways (calli) is devoted to the workers.

We will make only one of the hundred examples of this feature of the town.

1. Piazzale Roma and Calatrava Bridge: the bridges of Venice are 387
2. San Simon Picolo
3. INAIL
4. Calle de le Chiovere e de le Chioverete
5. Calle e fundamenta de le Sechere
6. Calle de la Laca
7. Calle del Tintoreto
8. Chiesa dei Frari : Cappella dei Lombardi (Corporazione dei Fabbri)- 3° cappella a sinistra
9. Scuola di San Rocco : le Scuole Grandi
10. Calle dei calegheri
11. Calle dei mandoleri
12. Scuola dei calegheri a San Tomà : dipinti murali della scuola dei muranesi, offerta degli zoccoli alla dogaressa Zilia Dandolo, moglie del doge Priuli. La corporazione comprendeva 350 aziende con 1.200 persone. Lunetta : San Marco e Sant'Aniano.
13. Passaggio in Gondola
14. Campo Santo Stefano . nella chiesa di Santo Stefano e nella salizada San Samule vi era il cluster dei calegheri tedeschi
15. Calle de le Ostreghe
16. Camera di Commercio
17. Chiesa di San Moisé
18. Portale di San Marco
19. Capitelli di Palazzo Ducale
20. Riva degli Schiavoni (omaggio agli Slavi)
21. Short stop under the TORRE DE L'OROLOGIO and the history of the VECIA DEL MORTER
22. Calle degli Albanesi
23. Calle degli specchieri
24. Calle de la spadaria
25. Calle de le mercerie
26. Calle dei Fabbri
27. Riva del Carbon
28. Riva del Ferro
29. Ponte di Rialto : in quest'area vi è il Fontego dei Tedeschi, centro commerciale dedicato ai popoli del Nord, che è stato Palazzo delle Poste, dismesso e ceduto a Benetton.
30. Ruga degli orefici
31. Ruga degli speziali
32. Erbaria
33. Campo de la cordaria
34. Campo de la pescaria
35. Calle della donzella
36. Calle dei botteri
37. Campiello de lo spezier
38. Calle del tintor : all'altezza della Calle del Tintor, vi è in riva del Canal Grande il Fontego dei Turchi, che oggi è Museo di Storia Naturale
39. Calle de lo spezier
40. Calle del forno
41. Calle del pistor
42. San Simon Grando (from Simon to Simon)

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The capitals of the Ducal Palace

- É The main capitals of the Ducal Palace show the values table of the Republic: many of them represent the major arts and crafts, in honor of the labour as foundation of the wealth and strengths of the state, especially from the capital 17 to 25
- É Stonemasons are represented twice
- É Medicine doctors are not represented only St.Raphael with Toby

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The portal of St.Mark Basilica

- É On the main Portal of the Basilica, there are mosaics with a gold background where Christ is represented
- É In the arch around many artisans and professions: according to the Venice Republic “vision” and values table, labour and crafts deserve the most honour in the present and future world
- É A good news: among the 14 crafts and professions, we have also (surprise!) the medicine doctors, who deserve the paradise with their job, according to the republic vision

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Murano, the most ancient industrial district still active

- É Today we have in Italy and all over in the world, many industrial and productive clusters and districts, that's integrated areas of similar production where co-operation and competition are embedded
- É Murano was and is the only industrial cluster or integrated district still active after 10 centuries: the concept of “cluster” as integrated production and value chain is one of the most interesting innovation that Venice introduced

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Venice: the justice, welfare and hospitals

- É The courts: also the nobles were condemned, all the duques who tried to change the elective system into hereditary or dynastic one, were killed, immediately,always
- É Other Charities were for the pilgrims, immigrants and diseased: in Venice there were 68 Hospitals
- É Health was organized with many preventive measures, like quarantine, isolation of the infected people in the islands and in the boats around the island (Lazzareto Nuovo), far from the city : when new people came to the site, all gave welcome with applauses and loud cheers : You are coming to the land of Cockcaine “, because they were well-fed by the Republic for all the time of quarantine
- É Medicine doctors had their own “corporation”, and the Venice policy was to define very precisely their emolument fees, every royalty on the medicines was forbidden, the most important doctors, coming also from Padua and Bologna, were “invited” to Venice for free consultation in the case of poor people

- É Also for the poor people: one of these charities was very famous and exists even today: *Ospedale della Pietà*, an orphanage for poor and illegitimate children where Vivaldi worked between 1703 and 1740

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The Events

- É The **Venice Biennale** (*Biennale di Venezia*; also called in English the "Venice Biennial") is a major contemporary art exhibition that takes place once every two years (in odd years) The Venice Film Festival is part of it, as is the **Venice Biennale of Architecture**, which is held in even years. A dance section, the "International Festival of Contemporary Dance", was established in 1999.
- É Sections: Architecture, Art, Film (every year), Dance, Music, Theatre.
- É The section "Biennale delle arti minori e decorative" (Biennial of the minor and decorative art & crafts) sadly was abolished in 1972: taking into account the fact that Venice is a masterpiece of the crafts, this section should be renewed

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The International Film Festival

The most suitable event for Venice is the Venice Film Festival, because the great artists of Venice were specifically connected with this art: Cima da Conegliano, Giorgione, Tiziano Vecellio, Tintoretto, Veronese and others were inventors of the "tonal colour", real "scenarists" and fathers of Zeffirelli, Fellini, Sergio Leone. Moreover Canaletto invented the optic camera for his sights, together with Bellotto and Guardi, Tiepolo was a movie director, with a rare sense of perspective and lights, Piranesi with his fanciful drawing of the scenes and classic stages

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Film Festival and Venice location

- É Venice is a fanciful film location: the whole city seems a set for a movie for rising emotions, sensations and lightening colours
- É Film Festival is a footprint of this natural vocation: in the past centuries, the urban life of Venice was described by Goethe, Byron, Mann, Brodskij etc as a "show" and a script for the human comedy
- É Brodskij in particular, with his work *FONDAMENTA DEGLI INCURABILI*, wrote one of the best homages to this vision of Venice, as "factory of dreams", as "town of the eye", where "the purpose of all the things is always the same: to be seen, to be shown", "a gigantic liquid mirror", writes Brodskij
- É He remembers *Invisible Cities* of Italo Calvino, where the "visitor" is just Marco Polo: "in a city you don't enjoy the seven wonders or the seventy seven wonders, but the answer she gives to a question of yours"

Some numbers :

120 Dukes

117 islands

387 bridges

Writers and poets :

UK: Byron, Ruskin

USA: Ezra Pound, Hemingway, Henri James,

RUSSIA: Brodsky

TURKEY: Orhan Pahmuk

FRANCE: Proust, George Sand and Alfred de Musset

GERMANY: Thomas Mann, Goethe, Eva Demsky

HOLLAND: Erasmus