

Day 6 - 14th September

Famous in the arts

We have another hot and sunny day to explore San Lio, where Canaletto is buried, and to admire the ceiling fresco by Tiepolo, plus a Titian and a Giovane altarpiece. Nearby is Santa Maria della Fava which has the interesting story about the Tiepolo (1st altar on the right) which was stolen on 14th December 1993. The thieves had a problem stealing it, and it was later found and returned, and you can make out a faint fold mark in the painting if you look closely.

Venice Biennale

The 2016 Venice Biennale was taking place, so we enjoyed visiting the Sigmar Polke exhibition of alchemic experiments and colours in Palazzo Grassi (the last substantial private noble palace built in Venice); and a wonderful architectural exhibition by Zaha Hadid in Palazzo Franchetti. I knew many of Hadid's buildings from the Olympic Aquatic Centre in London, to Cardiff Bay Opera House and the Grand Buildings in Trafalgar Square. The Palazzo Franchetti is a beautiful palace with a lovely garden going to the Grand Canal. There was a free architectural exhibition in Palazzo Bembo (built 1460 and an important focus of Venetian Renaissance culture) near a vaporetto stop that we spotted too.

Palaces

These palaces all front onto the Grand Canal, and are not open regularly so it is an opportunity to see the wonderful beamed and decorated ceilings and Murano glass chandeliers. The Venetian palaces required no fortifications, so secure in their lagoon, protected by the Arsenale.

We climbed the unique helical stairs up five levels of the Scala Contarini del Bovolo (Italian word for snail) to the Belvedere which has a view over Venetian rooftops to St Mark's and visit the Tintoretto Room just opened for the first time this July 2016. Imagine painting over Tintoretto frescoes because you are using it as an office! Some remains of the frescoes can be seen, plus some lovely paintings included in the Contarini Palace.



Louise climbing Scala Contarini del Bovolo

Exhibitions and collections

After some drinks in a tavern and a picnic of the almond tarts we went along the Grand Canal to Punta della Dogana, a Custom House originally, to see the Accrochage exhibition. It has the layout of a warehouse, suitable for the contemporary artworks from the Francois Pinault Foundation. We loved Guillaume Leblon's sculpture of a coat (Manteau 2013) which was inspired by a woman in Vancouver with a coat over her head due to rain.

At 3.30pm we listened to an organ recital (there is one most days for free) at Basilica di Santa Maria Salute, and visited the Sacristy which is well worth it, to see the self portrait of Tintoretto as a grey haired man in an orange cloak, as part of an enormous painting.

The Peggy Guggenheim collection was next, as I had recently seen the film Art Addict, which showed how Peggy changed art history in this palatial home. We loved the sculpture garden, with the Henry Moore figures and the famous Angel of the City bronze horse and rider sculpture by the seating area overlooking the Grand Canal. From here we were given discounted tickets to Palazzo Cini nearby, so fitted that in, and it is very interesting, with two floors, the first in a home setting including art, china and furniture.



Venetian Canal

Venice and amazing Interrail stop!

We took in one last church on our way home, San Zaccaria, which was being restored when we last visited. It has three wonderful chapels, with many Tintoretto paintings including an altarpiece and a crypt that had some water lying. The vaulting frescoes in one chapel were by Andrea del Castegno. As global warming increases the sea levels, Venice will have to adapt to more flooding at high tides and the full moon. We checked the water level for our visit and were lucky. Other low lying cities can learn from Venice, which copes amazingly well with its sea level existence. Other cities may well learn to live over water! This was another amazing inter rail stop and such a unique experience.

