

Venice

Venice is the capital of the Veneto region in the northeast of the country. It is a city built on 118 islands which are separated by 177 canals, and joined by 409 bridges. There are no roads in the centre, so the only way to get around is by boat or on foot! Venice has over 3 million visitors a year, meaning the city is often overcrowded.



The Grand Canal

This is one of the major water-traffic corridors in Venice. It is 3.8km long, and curves in a reverse 'S' shape through the city. It is between 30 and 90 metres wide, and an average of 5 metres deep. Water-buses, water-taxis and gondolas are a popular way for tourists to explore the city, and see some of the 170 buildings that sit on the banks of the Grand Canal.

Saint Mark's Basilica is a Catholic church built between 978-1092AD. It is nicknamed 'Chiesa d'Oro', which means the 'church of gold', due to its extravagant design and shimmering gold mosaics, which cover over 8000m² (that's enough to cover about two football fields!). The church also has an altar screen studded with thousands of gems, including pearls, emeralds, sapphires and rubies.



Saint Mark's Basilica



Doge's Palace

The Doge's Palace was once home to the 'Doge' of Venice – the ruler of the city. Venice was governed by an elected leader for over 1000 years until 1797. Each new Doge was crowned in the courtyard of the building on the Giant's Staircase, so-called due to the two huge statues of the Roman gods of Mars and Neptune that stand on either side of the top of the steps. Since 1923, the building has been a museum.



Piazza San Marco (St. Mark's Square)

Piazza San Marco, or Saint Mark's Square, is the largest square in Venice. It is surrounded by Saint Mark's Basilica, the Doge's Palace, a bell tower, museums and a library. There is also a smaller square that joins onto the main square called 'piazzetta' (little square). Until the 18th century, this was where criminals were executed. Nowadays, pigeons are a problem as they can cause damage to the buildings. A law has recently been made making it illegal to feed them.

This windowed bridge passes over the Rio di Palazzo. It connects the Prigioni Nouve (New Prison) to the interrogation rooms in the Doge's Palace. It was built in 1600, and given its name by the suggestion that the convicts who crossed the bridge into the prison would look at the view from the bridge and sigh, as this would be the last beautiful thing they saw before being taken down to their windowless cell. Also, according to legend, if a couple kiss on a gondola at sunset under the Bridge of Sighs, they will be granted eternal love!



The Bridge of Sighs



Rialto Bridge

This is the oldest of four bridges that span the Grand Canal in Venice. The current bridge was completed in 1591. There had been a wooden bridge in this location before, but it had been damaged in a fire and then collapsed, so it was decided to rebuild it in stone. The bridge has a central 'portico' (porch) and has rows of shops on either side of it, which are mostly jewellery or souvenir shops.



Now that you have found out about some of the major landmarks of Venice, as a group you are going to use this information to create a short presentation about the city to show to the rest of your class!

Think carefully about what information you will share, and how you will share it (don't just read out the fact sheet!). Try to make your presentation interesting and informative. Make sure everyone in the group has a role. You can use the Picture Cards in your presentation too, as well as the Map of Italy.

