

FREE FASHION TRAVEL PEOPLE IDEAS BEAUTY

STYLIST

ARABIA

ISSUE 85
NOVEMBER 2016
STYLISTARABIA.COM



LET'S
GO
OUTSIDE

(we hear it's quite
nice this time of year)

ESCAPE
ROUTESFROM WATERWAYS,
TO A STYLISH DAZEARRIVE IN STYLE VIA
YOUR GONDOLA

A TALE OF TWO CITIES



Stylist's Acting Editor, Michaela Williams, discovers that location is everything in

Italy's high-traffic tourism hubs

Recently, the trolley-wielding citizens of Venice took to the heritage city's canals, protesting against the wash of tourists that flood the city every summer. So my weekend visit just a few days later left me feeling somewhat guilty to be adding to the fray by checking into Splendid Venice, a canal-side hotel that's in the thick of the water-locked city. A feeling that nevertheless soon evaporated as soon as I ogled the hotel's prime position.

The Rialto Bridge is a short stroll away, San Marco Square with its epic cathedral just five minutes in the opposite direction, making the boutique

hotel ideal for Venice first-timers. For a centrally-location hotel, its interior public spaces are remarkably calm and the rooms even more so, despite the grid of sound-amplifying canals that surround us. Checking into our room, I'm immediately taken by the dusky pink velvet sofas, the gilt fittings and frames, and our view straight down a particularly Instagrammable canal. It's neither the sleek Modernism nor ornate gold on gold we're used to in Dubai, with the striped wallpaper combining with the wide windows to give a Victorian-lite vibe. After an aperitif on the split-level rooftop terrace, surrounded by an

ocean of pretty red roof tiles and – very faintly – the shouts of gondoliers passing each other, we returned to the ground floor for dinner. Outside of Dubai, hotel restaurants can be a gamble, but fortunately luck was smiling on us at Le Maschere. The in-house fine dining restaurant makes the most of the summer nights, with the generous dining space opened

up to the stars thanks to the retractable roof. Inside, the back wall windows sit at water-level, so we could eyeball gondolas whizzing by the next morning.

Kicking off with a platter of some of the plumpest, juiciest oysters I've ever seen, we next tucked into a shareable smoked duck dish that was generous enough to be a main. The pasta course starred a fantastic carbonara – the best one I've ever had – and a dish we were disappointed by for the rest of our trip, as nothing else compared to the chef's perfectly balanced egg and Parmesan sauce, made in the traditional style. Finishing up with a perfectly balanced tiramisu – with 'just a few bites' of a shared pot turning into seconds – we were completely content without even ordering from the secondi menu.

If you're after something less

VENETIAN STYLE AT
SPLENDID VENICE

extravagant, take to the street to discover the seafood risotto, a Venetian classic. When visiting tourism hotspots, I always follow the rule of 20. That is, find the major nearby landmark, and then walk for 20 minutes in the opposite direction. While the major sights are still must-visits, hanging around St Mark's all day could quickly become anxiety inducing. We set off at a fast trot to the far side of the island – a easy ask given the city's smaller size – and without a set plan, found the risotto, a couple of spritzes, and a cup or two of pistachio gelato. Small enough to explore without a map, big enough to get lost in, Venice may live up to its reputation (much to its residents' chagrin) as a tourist city, but the perma-holiday vibe only makes it a more enticing destination.

If Venice is the almost cartoonish picture-perfect tourist hub, then Milan is its primped, almost untouchably aloof counterpart. Not that the fashion destination doesn't flaunt its own postcard moments. The famous Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, a gorgeous vaulted glass-ceiled, fresco-painted and designer-filled four-storey shopping arcade could easily be mistaken for one of Italy's centuries-old cathedrals, with its well-

THE DESIGNER GALLERY
IS JUST STEPS AWAY

“THE PERMA-HOLIDAY VIBE ONLY MAKES VENICE MORE ENTICING”

maintained floors tiled with the city's coat of arms, and ornate molding on the internal windows. It's from one of the largest windows that we discover our hotel, the TownHouse Galleria, offers the best view for people-watching. Taking breakfast in the beautiful Ottagono Lounge – a space full of interesting, want-to-touch trinkets – our arched window look directly down upon the centre of Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, offering a rare

bird's eye view of the stunning mosaic floor, and even better, the between-gigs models, the fashionistas shadowed by their bag-draped porter (a service our hotel also offers), and the herds of stunned mullet tour groups blinking into Versace's windows. Heading out into the fray ourselves, the area around the Galleria is crowded with sightseers, taking in not only the world's oldest arcade, but the Duomo di Milano, the outrageously oversized Gothic-

A PRIME SEAT FOR
PEOPLE-WATCHING

style cathedral, a few metres outside of the hotel's doorstep. The accompanying piazza leads out into a warren of streets lined with fashion and gelato.

After an afternoon of flitting from Miu Miu and Prada, to the absolutely superb row of

oversized Dolce & Gabbana boutiques, relaxation is finally found in our TownHouse Galleria room. As fashionable as its surrounds, the room fit-out was designed by Ettore Mocchetti, the editor in chief of Italy's *Architectural Digest*, for a warmly-lit and modern-detailed living space that is as cleverly functional as it is pleasing to look around in. There's the expansive bathroom, the clever tech touches, the plushest bath robes that my luxury-addict partner had ever encountered, plus the centrepiece bed with a designer headboard. And as it happens, the temptingly cosy bed is one place even the most imposing tourist couldn't intrude on.

Splendid Venice rooms start from Dhs807. TownHouse Galleria starts from Dhs2,220 per night for a double room. Splendid Venice and TownHouse Galleria are members of the Preferred Hotels & Resorts LVX Collection; preferredhotels.com

DAY TRIPPIN'

The short jaunts out of town to get away from the tourist crowds

1 BURANO
Often derided for its tourist-packed streets, the island of Burano is still worth the 45 minute vaporetto trip from Venice's ferry terminal. The candy-coloured townhouses are the major draw (just think of the Instagram potential!), but we'd recommend following the bridge to adjacent Mazzorbo, where vineyards, artichoke fields, and boutique restaurants offer gourmet dining and a crowds respite.

2 VICENZA
Hop a train to Vicenza, 45 minutes

out from Venice, and spend the day exploring the handiwork of Andrea Palladio. The 16th century architect still has 23 exceptionally maintained villas within the former ancient Roman city walls, the most famous known as La Rotonda

3 PARMA
Home of parmesan cheese, Parma is a foodie-focused destination, with the region also known for its pastas, breads and cured meats. Find a local deli and enjoy an Italian aperitivo hour you'll have trouble besting.

PICTURE PERFECT
IN BURANO

4 BERGAMO
Just 50 minutes from Milan by train, Bergamo boasts the beautiful Colleoni Chapel in its Città Alta (High City), overlooking the newer town below. Go in spring, and spend the day wandering the medieval streets.