

The 2 Idiots Travel Blog
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Ultimate Kid Friendly Itinerary for spending 1, 2, 3 or 4 Days in Venice, Italy

Why do The 2 Idiots recommend Venice?

Venice is one of those must-visit cities in the world, and certainly one of the most unique cities we visited. Venice is a series of tiny islands that were once inhabited. When refugees escaping persecution from Rome began hide here, they began building the city from the marshes using wooden poles dug deep into the bottom of the lagoon to create foundations that have now stood solid since 421 AD. While it's a cool city that you should see, it is definitely more touristy than we prefer. It doesn't feel as if anyone actually lives on the island; it feels like one giant tourist trap. Plus, Natasha found it the water stinky in some places.

CREATING AN IDEAL ITINERARY

Venice island is shaped like a fish, with canals cutting through it as the main thoroughfares, winding, tiny backstreets that can turn you around, and bridges upon bridges to cross via staircases. (We were the fittest we have ever been when we were in Venice!) Venice is intimate, so it's easy to explore on your own. Ferries make it easy to island hop to the neighboring Murano and Burano for a day trip, as well.

Logistics

We rented an AirBnB in Cannaregio, which was originally the Jewish Ghetto in the 16th century. The neighborhood isn't as crowded or touristy as others and had lots of great shopping along Strada Nova and we highly recommend it. When you arrive by train to Venice, there are no taxis, only water taxis and ferries. Because the island was actually once marsh, it is filled with canals and bridges. Carrying luggage and a child over these bridges will be very difficult, and the water taxis will charge you a fortune to get you to your accommodations. Instead, negotiate a price with a porter who can carry your bags and walk you to your hotel or AirBnB. We saw plenty of porters at the train station knowing people will need help.

| Vacation days | Itinerary | Estimated cost per person (only attractions) |
|---------------|--|---|
| Day 1 | Take a walking tour of Venice Stroll around Canal Grande in the evening and visit Rialto Bridge | Free |
| Day 2 | Visit Murano and Burano on a day-trip | €20 for a ferry day pass €5.50 for Lace Museum €10 – 15 for glass-blowing demonstration |
| Day 3 | Enjoy a ferry ride across the Grand Canal (Ca' d'Oro is where we took it to San Marco) Visit St. Marks Square <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Have a Belini at Harry's Bar ● Visit Doge's palace ● St. Mark's Basilica ● Elevator to top of Campanile ● Walk around St. Mark's square | €20 for the Doge's Palace St. Mark's Basilica is free; its museum is €5 The Campanile is €8 |
| Day 4 | Spend the day in Cannaregio and enjoy aperitivo | Free |

Day 1: Step into the heart of Venice

To get acquainted with the city, we recommend beginning with a [walking tour](#). It will help you get your bearings, and if you do as we did, our tour showed us the offbeat side of Venice that weren't filled with a bunch of tourists. Later, on your own, we visited the touristy places and it was crazy to see the difference. Our walking tour was amazing; we had an art history major who really knew about the architecture of the city and could explain the bridges, the buildings and the past.

With so many bridges, it was one of our most difficult walking tours. Our son, Aarav, loved going up and down stairs so we would take him out of his stroller at each bridge and it really slowed us down. This will be a time where you will need to divide and conquer: one parent keeps up with the tour while the other manages the children. (Read our [guide to walking tours with a toddler](#) for tips.)

After your tour, stroll around the Canal Grande, the markets and the Rialto Bridge (lots more steps and lots of crowds). The markets fill very narrow streets and have a great energy in the evening, with lots of the regular shops you'd expect mixed in with some authentic Italian shops. The area is best at night, especially with the Rialto Bridge illuminated – the scenery, the people, the architecture, the look and feel – it's magical.

Day 2: Island Hop in the Venice Lagoon

On your second day, purchase a day pass for the island ferries and visit Murano and Burano. Murano is a short ferry ride from Venice and is renowned around the world for its amazing glasswork, which is incredibly beautiful. A little further afield is Burano, known for its lace, as well as its multi-colored buildings that make it a perfect backdrop for photos. Both islands are even smaller than Venice, and you can see both in one day.

Learn more about what to see and do on each island in our guide to the Venetian Islands.

Day 3: Tour the Grand Canal

On your third day in Venice, enjoy a ferry ride along the famous Grand Canal. The ride itself is beautiful, as you take in Venice from the waterways in the open air. While everyone raves about gondola rides, we skipped this. First of all, they are very expensive (~€100 for just 20 minutes) and we weren't going to spend that on a ride with our son – it wouldn't be romantic with the three of us, and with the water stinky in places, we didn't think it would be romantic even if it were just the two of us!

The ferries are cheaper and just as enjoyable for views. Take yours to St. Mark's Square, Piazza San Marco. This is the main square of Venice, St. Mark's main feature is its basilica, which is insanely beautiful in its marble Byzantine opulence. Right at the ferry stop is Harry's Bar Cipriani, which is famous for Bellinis. Aarav had fallen asleep in his stroller on the ferry so we popped into Harry's, which goes back to the 1930s and is known as much for its champagne and peach drink, as well as its famous clientele. The Bellini cost almost €30 but was fantastic!

Along the square is the Rialto, which is the main shopping street of Venice. Our son loved running and playing in the square, as there are no cars and plenty of pigeons to chase (you cannot feed the birds). Cafes and shops line the square, which is filled from day to night with visitors taking in all of the beauty.

We made the mistake of skipping the Doge's Palace, which is an absolutely stunning structure that dates back to the Renaissance. Even more ornate in its interior than the basilica, you can tour the palace and picture Venetian life when masked balls were held in the ballrooms. As the

chief magistrate, prisoners were taken to this building for their trials. If sentenced to prison, they were immediately taken via a bridge to the adjoining prison. The bridge is now called the Bridge of Sighs, because it was the last glimpse of their beloved Venice before placed into windowless cells, causing heavy sighs. Continuing into the prison, it is difficult to imagine living in the confines of this dark and dank buildings, simply steps away from the gold plating and shiny marble of the palace. Don't make our mistake and visit!

Visit the Basilica, which was originally the chapel of the Doge, the chief magistrate of Venice, and once upon a time the most powerful person in Venice. The basilica was being reconstructed at the time Pisa was building its cathedral. As two rival cities, they each did their best to outdo the other and it's safe to say Venice won. Lines extend from its entrance all day, and you can purchase tickets to skip the line through tour agencies (from April through October), but we found that waiting until the end of the day, an hour before it closes, the line was miniscule and you could get in without paying a fee. The square's bell tower, the Campanile, also allows for skip-the-line tickets. There is an elevator to the top (you actually cannot walk up the top and must take it), which provides fantastic views of the square, the Grand Canal, and Venice.

Day 4: Live Locally in Cannaregio

With a fourth day in Venice, skip the touristy places and enjoy the more low-key and local life in Cannaregio. Get lost strolling its narrow streets and shopping in intimate stores. The Venetians take pride in enjoying aperitivo, which could be compared to happy hour, incorrectly! It's more about spending a couple of hours enjoying drinks that stimulate your palate and get you ready for dinner. Often, Cicchetti, or small plates (similar to tapas in Spain) are a part of the aperitivo hours, which is perfect for kids, as they can get an early dinner off the Cicchetti and you can enjoy a proper dinner together later.

KID-FRIENDLY TIPS

- This city will be hard to travel in with kids, so be ready for a workout, especially if your kids can't walk up and down the many bridges.
- Do take your [good stroller](#), as there are a lot of sections you can walk for a while without a bridge. Also, there are a lot of places along the canals without railings. We recommend keeping your child in the stroller for safety; if not, be extra careful in these areas.
- There are a lot of squares where children would play with a ball or just run around, so carry a ball or another toy your child likes so they can play with other kids. Our son loved running behind the birds, especially in St. Mark's Square. We didn't find a park or any patch of grass in Venice, although we did find one in Burano.

OTHER TIPS

- St. Mark Basilica is the most popular place to visit in Venice. Rather than start your day here, visit later in the evening, about an hour before it closes and you'll avoid the long lines.
- Water taxis are super expensive, so learn the ferry routes. They are Venice's public transportation routes and pretty easy to use.
- When you arrive at the train station, find a porter to carry your stuff to your accommodations are within walking distance; it's much cheaper than a water taxi, and easier than carrying all your gear on your own.
- Google Maps were very helpful in Venice. They gave us ferry schedules and stops, as well as the best path to walk places. Be sure you have a good plan so you can use your maps.
- When it comes to dining, avoid the tourist trap restaurants, especially in the most popular places like Canal Grande or St. Marks, that will overcharge you and won't provide you with authentic or quality foods.
- Foods we enjoyed: We loved the use of pistachio, which were in season during our trip in September. Have a pistachio croissant, and, being on the water, sample the seafood – we really loved the black ink squid. Be sure to also enjoy aperitivo and Cicchetti (basically happy hour with small plates for the Venetians).
- Shopping: We found the better shopping in the Cannaregio neighborhood, where we stayed, as it was less commercial. When in St. Marks, visit the Golden Goose luxury fashion store.