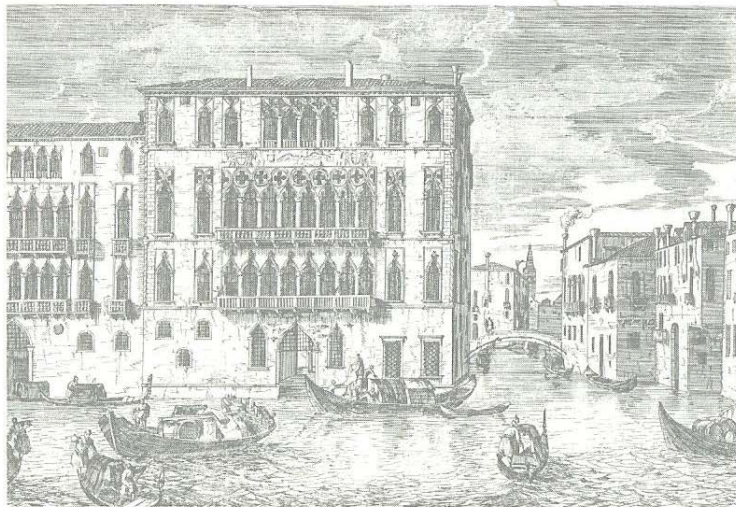




*Venice  
and the Villas of Asolo*



October 18<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup>, 1998

Jessica Deutsch

## Venice and the Villas of Asolo

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Supreme in her beauty, Venice is like no other city in the world. Her domes, glittering spires and marble buildings shimmer in a myriad of colors in the still waters of the lagoon that encircles her. Black gondolas glide swiftly, carrying us to the doorways of once stately palaces and churches rich in history, luring us into a dreamlike trance as we experience simultaneously the oriental world of Byzantium and that of the West. Outside the city on the sunny slopes of the Euganean and Berici hills we step into Palladian villas. Once owned by the aristocracy who managed great agricultural estates, these are today opulent private homes. With four days in Venice and accommodation in the romantic setting of the *Hotel Metropole*, off St Mark's Square, and three days in Asolo in the beautiful setting of the *Villa Cipriani*, we offer an exquisite experience of the Venetian way of life.

Led by Michael Bentley, a long time resident of the area, we will have a unique opportunity to get to know Venetians, some the surviving descendants of great doges or admirals. These people will show us a Venice that cannot be understood through great churches and palaces. The concentration of our studies outside of Venice will be Palladian palazzi and gardens around Asolo. While Venice will dazzle us with the opulence of her art, we

will taste in the countryside a sensitivity to nature and the landscape.

Our study of the city, with several scholars, will take us to churches, palazzi and museums housing masters of the Renaissance. Highlights will be the *Basilica Di San Marco* and the *Doge's Palace* called by John Ruskin "the central building of the world". This was the residence of the Doges when Venice was her own republic and supreme in her powers as mistress of the seas. Venice, then calling herself the *Serenissima*, was the conduit between East and West trading in fine silks, cloths of gold, gemstones, scents and spices. For those who know the secrets of her hidden mysteries there are still today irresistible treasures to be found. Patterned velvets, Fortuny fabrics, embroidered linens and antique jewels and cameos, masks in the 18<sup>th</sup> century tradition and the softest of leathers await us in studios and shops.

Visits to surrounding islands will take us out onto the lagoon to *Murano*, famous for its glass; to *Torcello* with its charming church; and to *Burano*, known for its lace. Visiting at a time of year when Venice is least populated by tourists we will see why Venice has entranced so many writers and artists and remains a city that captivates the imagination.

### Schedule

#### Sunday, October 18<sup>th</sup>

Check into the *Hotel Metropole* situated off the *Piazza San Marco*. Twilight gondola ride on the *Grand Canal*. Reception at a private palazzi followed by

restaurant dinner and return by gondola to the hotel.

#### Monday, October 19<sup>th</sup>

Morning lecture on the history of Venice. We then visit *The Doge's Palace*, the thousand year-old home of the rulers of Venice where we enjoy one of the most magnificent buildings in the world. As Henry James wrote, "All the history of Venice, all its splendid stately past, glows around you in a strong sea light". The Doge was supported by a dread tribunal of three who met in the palace every night to judge heinous political crimes. The doomed were marched into the covered *Bridge of Sighs*, through it and into the dungeon and to death. After lunch on *Piazza San Marco* we enter *The Basilica Di San Marco*. Descended from Byzantium in architecture and design, we sense in this treasure Venice's Eastern past. Besides the main attractions of Venice, we take you into some of the lesser known wonderful monuments. Included is a visit to the *Museo Correr* where we see historic memorabilia and documents concerning the glorious history of the Venetian Republic. Other treasures of the city await us in the next two days in ateliers where we will have time to shop.

#### Tuesday, October 20<sup>th</sup>

We devote the day to places that will awaken one's imagination to what Venice was in her glory and in the Golden Age of her painting. The *Ca' d'Oro* museum is one such building, a ghost of its former beauty as one of the grandest Byzantine Palaces but which contains one of the

largest and most important collections of art in Venice. At the *Gallerie dell'Accademia*, the city's premier art gallery, we study Venetian painting with the curator. The charming half-ruined church of *San Giobbe* forces us to think how it must have been in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. At the *Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni* we are in the 15<sup>th</sup> century as we gaze at walls decorated by Carpaccio. Adding more color and variety to the rich palette of Venice we visit out-of-the-way nooks and crannies of the city familiar only to Venetians. At the *State Archives of the Venetian Republic*, once the cells of a Franciscan monastery, are preserved records of independent Venice from its earliest beginnings until its fall. Dinner and an evening concert performance.

#### Wednesday, October 21<sup>st</sup>

No experience of Venice is complete without a day on the lagoon. We visit the island town of *Torcello* which was the cradle of Venetian civilization. Its monumental center still survives with buildings that speak eloquently of the wealth and artistry of this first settlement in the Venetian lagoon. At *Burano* we are greeted by a colorful fishing village. The making of lace developed here at the turn of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and a school and workshop still operate. At *Murano* in the glass factories we see techniques carried out since the Renaissance.

#### Thursday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>

Morning departure for Asolo. En route we stop at a privately owned Palladian villa. We arrive at the *Villa Cipriani* in time for lunch. Situated in the hills, the villa,