



Palaces and peaks

Just five days to see Venice and the surrounding sights? Easy, says **Adam de Jacot** after a whistlestop tour of the City of Bridges and the Dolomites.

I challenge anyone who enters Venice not to be transfixed by the sudden cinematic entry into a bygone world. No cars, just boats, water and beautiful buildings. Don't try to take in everything, as you won't manage. It is very rich visually and there is always more to see.

The thing to do is to combine the central sights with the local outer parishes. I had a day's private boat trip with Lagunalonga (lagunalonga.com). Francesco was the charismatic de Niro lookalike skipper. He was dedicated to giving me the day I wanted which was to see the outer islands of Murano (renowned for its glass) Burano (its lace) and Torcello (the earliest and most remote cathedral and settlement).

Whenever possible when I come to Venice I try to spend time on the Giudecca. It's the island where Michelangelo spent three years in exile. It has two churches designed by Palladio that converse across the waters with San Giorgio and the Salute.

I stayed first at the Londra Palace (londrapalace.com), right by St Mark's, which overlooks the bacino. How romantic

to wake up and open the shutters to the central waterway hub of boating traffic emanating from the Grand Canal.

Then I moved to the resplendent Aman Venice (aman.com/resorts/aman-venice). Tucked away down a narrow passageway from the street is its discreet gateway while, from the front, there's an impressive jetty along with that rarity for the Grand Canal: a garden. There are only 24 guest rooms, which blend Venetian ornament with fresh tones of grey, cream and white. Everything that happens in Aman Venice is done with immaculate and graceful ease.

Save for the busying vaporettos and water taxis, Venice is a city without permanent noise. The lapping ripples of the encroaching water, invasive at aqua alta (high tide) remind one of the ultimate fragility of the lagoon while the sound of a

barcarola (gondolier's song) lulls one even more.

I got myself a Venezia Unica city pass and took a vaporetto in the evening up and down the Grand Canal. Only then can one see the true splendour of the gilded ceilings and expansive rooms of the opulent palazzos.

Inigorated by the architectural beauty of Venice, I took a three-hour coach journey north to the Dolomites. My popping ears heralded the altitude and my gaping yawns the fresh air.

I took a day's hiking. Starting at Colfosco up the Stella Alpina valley to Jimmy's restaurant for lunch. It's a perfect lunchtime spot after passing the other options of Edelweiss and Forcelles. There are wonderful views of forest and streams, and then wide expanses of mountains and meadows.

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