

BURANO

Map Venetian Lagoon. Vaporetto no. 12 from the Fondamente Nuove (close to the Gesuiti) c. every 30mins via Murano (Faro) and Mazzorbo. Journey time c. 40mins.

Burano almost resembles a toy village with its tiny little houses brightly painted in a great variety of colours, and miniature canals and *calli*. It has a cheerful atmosphere and almost all the shops sell lace. There is just one wide main street, named after Baldassare Galuppi (1706–85), known as *il Buranello*, the organist and composer of operatic and sacred music, who was born here. **San Martino** (open 7.30–12 & 3–6) contains a splendid painting of the *Crucifixion* by Giambattista Tiepolo, commissioned by a pharmacist in 1722, and three charming small paintings by Giovanni Mansueti. The **Museo del Merletto** (open 10–5 or 6, except Mon) has a fine collection of lace (beautifully displayed chronologically from the 16th to the 20th century), and from Tues–Fri ladies from Burano still meet here to practise their art. The island was for centuries the centre of Venetian lace-making (first produced in Venice in the late 15th century).

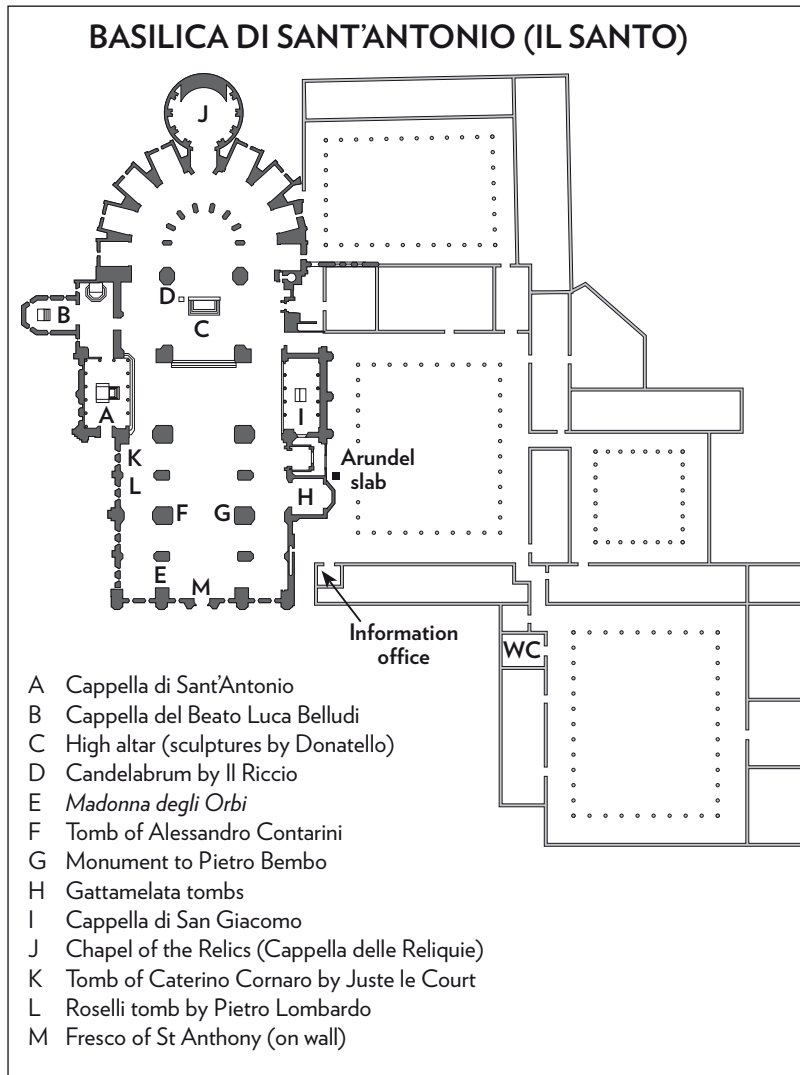
TORCELLO

Vaporetto no. 9 from Burano (map Venetian Lagoon) in 5mins every half-hour. There are a number of restaurants but no shops.

Torcello, inhabited before Venice itself, is the most beautiful and evocative place in the Venetian lagoon. Though now only a remote small group of houses (and no cars), it still preserves some lovely relics of its days of splendour. The people of Altinum took temporary shelter on the island from Lombard invaders on the mainland in the 5th and 6th centuries, until their settlement there was finally abandoned and Bishop Paul moved the bishopric of Altinum to Torcello in 639, bringing with him the relics of St Heliodorus, Altinum's first bishop (still preserved in the cathedral).

At one time the island is said to have had 20,000 inhabitants and was a thriving centre of wool manufacturing, but it had started to decline by the 15th century. The rivalry of Venice compounded by malaria—due to the marshes formed by the silting up of the river Sile—brought about its downfall. In the 17th century the population had already dwindled to a few hundred; it now has only a handful.

From the landing-stage a brick path follows the peaceful canal to the island's group of monuments. There is a combined ticket for all of them, but they all have slightly different opening times. The **cathedral** (open March–Oct 10.30–5.30; winter 10–4.30) is a superb Veneto-Byzantine basilica which is one of the most beautiful churches in all Venice, famous for its mosaics. Founded in the 7th century, it was altered in 864 and rebuilt in 1008. The memorable interior is one of the highest achievements of Christian architecture. In the central apse, depicted on a bright gold ground, the mosaic figure of the Virgin is one of the most striking ever produced in Byzantine art. The large mosaic of the *Last Judgement* which covers the west wall dates from the late 11th century, and in the south apse are more ancient mosaics including a delightful vault decoration of four angels with the mystic Lamb. The iconostasis consists of four large marble *plutei* (11th century), elaborately carved with late Byzantine designs, and there are lovely 7th century marble panels in the apse. The pagan sarcophagus below the high altar contains the relics of St



1. *St Anthony Kneeling to Receive the Franciscan Habit*, by Antonio Minello (1517).
2. *The Jealous Husband Prevented from Killing his Beautiful Wife Suspected of Adultery*, by Giovanni Rubino (1524) and completed after his death

- by Silvio Cosini in 1536.
3. *The Young Boy Brought back to Life*, a dramatic scene by Danese Cattaneo and Girolamo Campagna (1571–7). The boy's parents, shown kneeling in the background, had been accused of murdering him because his body had

been found in their garden. But the boy is about to reveal the name of his assassin, shown on the extreme right, wringing his hands in despair. In the background is Padua's Palazzo della Ragione.

4. *The Virgin Carilla Brought back to Life*. Having drowned, she is shown coming back to life in a dramatic scene while her mother, a striking-looking old lady, looks on. It is signed by Jacopo Sansovino (1540–50), 'Florentine sculptor and architect', and is in a style quite different from the other panels by the sculptors from the Veneto. The Basilica del Santo is shown in the background.
5. *Parrasio Brought back to Life*, by Antonio Minello (1528), finished by Jacopo Sansovino in 1532. Parrasio was St Anthony's nephew and had been drowned.
6. *The Heart of the Dead Miser Found in his Strong Box instead of in his Body* (representing a clear statement against usury), by Tullio Lombardo, dated by him 1525.
7. *The Irascible Youth's Severed Leg Restored to Him* (after confessing to the saint, he had amputated it in repentance, and here the saint is shown in person as he reattaches it), also by Tullio Lombardo. This is one of the most classical of the reliefs, with the figure of the woman, probably the boy's mother, tearing her hair, and the splendid nude body of the boy.
8. *The Glass Dropped by the Unbeliever Adelardino Remains Unbroken*, begun by Giovanni Maria Mosca and finished after 1529 by Paolo Stella. This was a miracle performed posthumously by St Anthony so he is not present: but Adelardino (in armour) has just dropped the glass and his companions are crowding round to see if it is still intact.
9. *The Newborn Babe Identifying his True Mother; Accused of Adultery by her Husband*, by Antonio Lombardo. This classical relief, the first to be completed, clearly influenced work on all the others.

The altar in front of the saint's tomb has eleven bronze statues by Tiziano Aspetti added at the end of the 16th century.

A door leads into a dark chapel off which is the **Cappella del Beato Luca Belludi (B)**, St Anthony's companion, who is buried here. It is decorated with early frescoes dating from 1382 by Giusto de' Menabuoi relating the story of this little-known Franciscan's life. It includes a scene of Padua itself enclosed in its walls.

THE SANCTUARY

Donatello produced the wonderful bronze statues and reliefs for the **high altar (C)** in 1446–49 but it has suffered many vicissitudes and its present reconstruction dates from 1895 (art historians still discuss just how Donatello intended to arrange the sculptures and the appearance of the original altar's architectural framework). Today the sanctuary is dark and the works are very difficult to see clearly unless you ask one of the uniformed custodians to unlock the gates at a time when Mass is not being held (the best time is often in the middle of the day).

Above twelve charming reliefs of angel musicians (only four of which are by Donatello's own hand) on either side of Christ as the Man of Sorrows, are four

ROVIGO & THE PO DELTA PRACTICAL TIPS

GETTING AROUND

By train: There are frequent trains from Rovigo to Badia Polesine (c. 30mins) calling at Fratta Polesine and Lendinara. Trains from Rovigo also go to Rosolina (c. 45mins) via Adria and Loreo. Rail services also link Rovigo with Venice (60–90mins) and Padua (c. 40mins), and there are a few through trains to Verona Porta Nuova (c. 2hrs). Trains link Rovigo and Chioggia in just over 1hr.

By bus: For Porto Tolle, there are buses from Rovigo main bus station. Journey time c. 90mins via Adria and Loreo. Buses also link Rovigo with Badia Polesina (c. 35mins) via Lendinara.

WHERE TO STAY

LOREO (map Veneto East B3) €€ **Cavalli.** In the heart of the Polesine. With restaurant, renowned for its risotto and seafood. Closed Mon. *Riviera Marconi 69, T: 0426 369868, www.albergocavalli.it.*

ROVIGO (map Veneto East A3–B3) €€ **Villa Regina Margherita.** In an Art-Nouveau style building, with restaurant. *Viale Regina Margherita 6, T: 0425 361540, hotelvillareginamargherita.it.*

TAGLIO DI PO (map Veneto East C3) € **Tessarín.** Simple but comfortable. With restaurant. *Piazza Venezia 4, T: 0426 346347, hotel-tessarín.com.* There are hotels of all categories at the holiday resorts of Albarella and Rosolina Mare.

WHERE TO EAT

ARIANO NEL POLESINE (map Veneto East B3) €€ **Stella del Mare.** There are good fish restaurants in the delta area (although mostly quite pricey). This one at Ariano (località Gorino Veneto) is frequented by those who appreciate excellent, simply cooked fish. With a garden, at the delta of the Po di Goro, which divides the Veneto from Emilia Romagna. Closed Mon and Tues at lunch. Best to book. *Via Po Superiore 36, T: 0426 388797, ristorantestelladelmare.com.*

LUSIA (map Veneto East A3) € **Trattoria al Ponte.** A good choice for a simple meal, at Lusìa, northeast of Lendinara. *Via Bertolda 27, T: 0425 669177, trattoriaalponete.com.*

PORTO TOLLE (map Veneto East C3) €€ **Da Brodon.** Trattoria renowned for its rice and fish dishes. Closed Mon. *Località Ca' Dolfin, T: 0426 384240.*

ROVIGO (map Veneto East A3–B3) €€ **Tavernetta Dante** (dai Trevisani). A well-known place to eat. Tables outside in summer. Closed Sun. *Corso del Popolo 212, T: 0425 26386.*

At Rovigo there are also many wine bars where you can have a Venetian *ombra*, a good glass of wine with delicious snacks (*cicchetti*).

LOCAL SPECIALITIES

At various markets in the Po Delta you can see the local catch of fish (in the mornings at Donada and Scardovari; and in the afternoons at Pila).

Vicenza

Vicenza (map Veneto West D2) is an extremely beautiful and well preserved small town in a pleasant position beneath the foothills of the green Monti Berici. Palladio (see below), who settled here in 1523, practically rebuilt it in his distinctive classical style, and established its fame to such an extent that it has been greatly admired by travellers since the 18th century. His most important buildings here are the Basilica and the Teatro Olimpico, but there are also numerous fine palaces by him (or inspired by him). Vicenza is a particularly pleasant place to visit. It is very peaceful, has excellent railway links, and it is just a short walk from the station to the centre of town. From the centre it is also easy to reach (on foot) two of the most important villas in the entire Veneto: La Rotonda, Palladio's architectural masterpiece, and the Villa Valmarana, with its joyous frescoes carried out some two centuries later by Giambattista and Gian Domenico Tiepolo.

ANDREA PALLADIO

Andrea di Pietro della Gondola (1508–80), nicknamed Palladio (from Pallas, the Greek goddess of wisdom) by his patron, the poet Giangiorgio Trissino (1478–1550), designed villas, palaces and churches throughout the Veneto in a Classical style that would profoundly change the face of the region and inspire numerous imitations. His *Quattro Libri*, or *Four Books on Architecture*, became a manual for later architects, especially in England and the United States. In the engraved illustrations for this treatise, Palladio noted the significant dimensions of his buildings, linking together their plan, section and elevation in a series of proportional relationships. The seemingly easy elegance that distinguishes Palladio's designs was, in fact, the result of his careful calculation of such proportional relationships. In applying these systems of numerical progression, which were often associated with contemporary musical harmonic theory, to the spatial relationships of a building, Palladio succeeded in creating the pleasing visual harmonies that characterise his architecture.

HISTORY OF VICENZA

The Roman municipium of *Vicetia*, the successor of a Gaulish town, was destroyed during the barbarian invasions, but traces of its theatre survived. It rose to importance again in the later Middle Ages and became a free *comune*. The Della Scala of Verona took control of the city after 1314, but from 1404 until the end of the Venetian Republic it placed itself firmly under the protection of the Serenissima.

