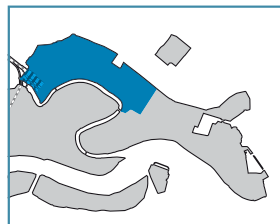


SESTIERE OF CANNAREGIO

This, the most northerly of the *sestieri*, takes its name from the Canal Regio, or Royal Canal, once the main route into Venice from the mainland. Its monuments are widely scattered and it is a *sestiere* of great contrasts, with bustling narrow streets and tiny *rii*, wide thoroughfares lined with shops, long stretches of peaceful canal, and the Ghetto, an enclave redolent of Jewish memories.



Some highlights of the *sestiere* of Cannaregio

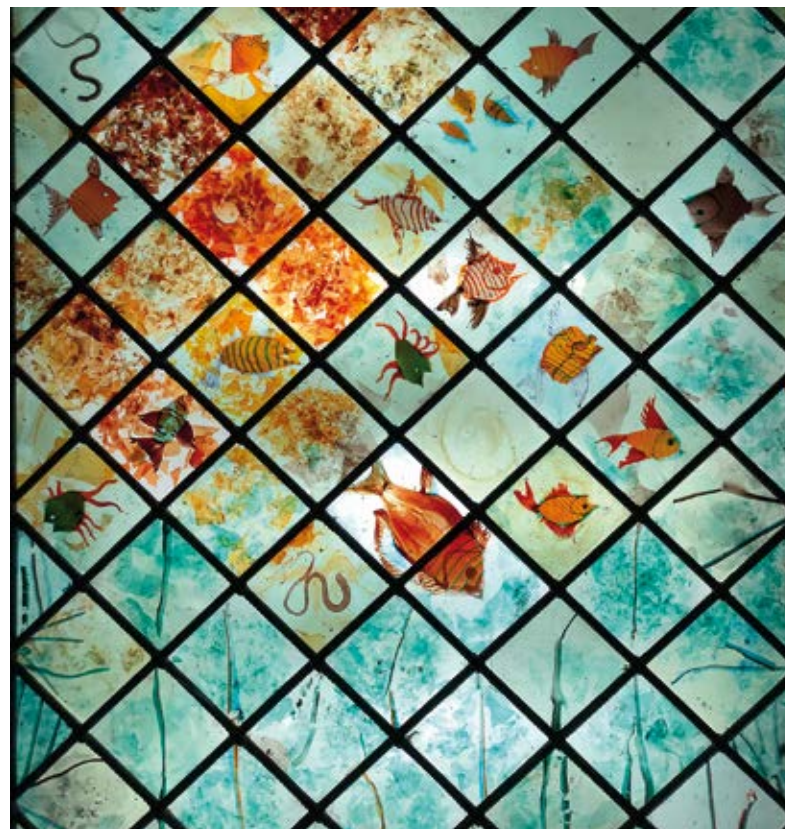
- ✦ The **Ca' d'Oro**, perhaps the most beautiful of all the palaces on the Grand Canal, open as a museum and home to a masterpiece by Mantegna;
- ✦ The **Ghetto**, which survives untouched from past centuries and where it is possible to visit some of its synagogues;
- ✦ The little church of the **Madonna dei Miracoli**, entirely covered inside and out with polychrome marbles and delicate carvings;
- ✦ On the far northern boundary of the *sestiere* the church of the **Madonna dell'Orto**, with remarkable paintings by Tintoretto, close to the house where the great artist lived.

The maps for this sestiere are on pp. 480–2.

AROUND THE SANTA LUCIA RAILWAY STATION

The busy area around the Ferrovia landing-stage (*map p. 480, B4*) provides the first point of entry and final moment of departure for many visitors to the city. It is a good place to begin exploring the western part of the *sestiere*.

The harmony of the Grand Canal was left undisturbed when the **Santa Lucia Railway Station** was built in 1952. Designed by Paolo Perilli, the simple long, low Rationalist building in Istrian stone is set back from the waterfront, approached by a wide flight of steps. At the top of these, the deep canopy roof has glass panes painted with images of marine life. A railway bridge and station were first built in 1846 to link Venice with the mainland. This completely changed the orientation of the approach to the city, which had formerly been exclusively by boat, usually along the Cannaregio Canal. The station stands on the site of the demolished church of Santa Lucia, hence its name.



A lagoon aquarium in painted glass: detail of the canopy over the main entrance to Santa Lucia Railway Station.

In 2008 the **Calatrava Bridge** was opened across the Grand Canal here, to connect the railway station to the road terminus at Piazzale Roma. Officially called the Ponte della Costituzione, it is always known as the Ponte di Calatrava, from the name of the architect who designed it, Santiago Calatrava. It has a huge steel span of over 80m with a dark red underside. The walkway is built partly of glass and partly of Istrian stone, with a bronze handrail. It is used by up to 20,000 people a day and though its shape is graceful and pleasing, it has come in for strong criticism. The walkway is slippery and treacherous in damp weather and it seems that the risers are too shallow for the hurried steps of the Venetians. Stability problems have also arisen on either shore and in general the bridge has not weathered well. The glass panes are cloudy and it seems prematurely dilapidated. At the time of writing, there were plans to rebuild the walkway.

GETTING TO LAZZARETTO NUOVO

Vaporetto no. 13 (about every hour) from Fondamente Nuove via Murano (Faro) and Le Vignole to the request stop for Lazzaretto Nuovo (the service continues to Sant'Erasmus). After the boat skirts the shore of Le Vignole it calls on request at Lazzaretto Nuovo (a traffic light on the pontoon can be activated to call for the boat when you return). For information about the excellent guided visits to the island, see lazzarettiveneziani.it. There is no public transport to Lazzaretto Vecchio.

HISTORY OF LAZZARETTO NUOVO

The Lazzaretto Nuovo was first used as a quarantine hospital in 1468, for ships arriving from the East, and was called 'Nuovo' to distinguish it from the Lazzaretto Vecchio (see below), which had been functioning as a plague hospital since 1423. The Lazzaretto Nuovo continued to be used as such for a number of centuries. The collector and art dealer John Murray, who was appointed British Resident in Venice in 1754 (and was then sent as Ambassador to Constantinople), was put in quarantine here when he returned to Venice and he died on the island of a fever in 1775 (he was interred in the Protestant cemetery on the Lido). The Lazzaretto Nuovo followed the fate of many other lagoon islands in the 19th century when it was occupied by the Austrians and used as an arms deposit, and there were military installations here right up until 1975. With the cooperation of volunteers from a local branch of the Archeoclub d'Italia, who still look after the island, restoration and excavations were begun in the late 1980s.

In the centre of the island is the **Tezon Grande**, one of the largest public buildings in Venice, more than 100m long and divided in half internally. It was used to decontaminate ships' merchandise (the goods were then fumigated outside, using rosemary and juniper smoke). When it was later used as a military store the arches were blocked up, but the splendid wood roof has been restored. On the walls are some interesting inscriptions made by sailors in the 16th century. The original brick herring-bone pavement survives (the Austrians inserted a wood floor above it, as can be seen from the raised stone blocks). Part of the building is now used as a store for archaeological finds made in the lagoon (*open to researchers*), and there are long-term plans to turn the building into a museum dedicated to the plague or to the natural history of the lagoon.

Some 200–300 sailors could be housed here at any one time, in small cells built against the perimeter wall, each with its own kitchen, fireplace and courtyard. These were demolished by the Austrians but the floors of some of them have been excavated.

Gunpowder and ammunition from the ships anchored here was stored in two little edifices, formerly with pyramidal roofs but altered in the 19th century (one of them has been restored as a little museum, which contains finds from excavations, including

prehistoric flints, Greek and Roman coins, and ceramics from later centuries).

Two well-heads survive, one still proudly decorated with the Lion of St Mark. Excavations have also revealed remains of a church (it is known that the Benedictines had a settlement here in the 12th century) and a cemetery. Mass graves have been excavated here, as well as on Lazzaretto Vecchio.

A path outside the walls leads right round the island in about half an hour—from it there is a very good view of the lagoon and its islands, and you can sometimes see herons, cormorants, swamp hawks, kingfishers and egrets on the water. You can see the mud flats and marshes (known as *barene*) typical of the lagoon. A sea dyke has been constructed on the west side of the island in an attempt to protect it from *acqua alta*, and a pilot project has been carried out close to the landing-stage which demonstrates that water can be purified by plant biology.

THE PLAGUE IN VENICE

As early as the 15th century the Venetian Republic had to take steps to contain the spread of disease. The *Serenissima's* dependence on trade, bringing ships from far-flung shores into Venetian ports, meant that the city and its inhabitants were particularly vulnerable (just as globalisation favoured the spread of Covid-19 in our own day). Some of the islands in the lagoon (San Clemente, Sacca Sessola, San Lazzaro degli Armeni) served as hospitals for contagious diseases, and the Lazzaretto Vecchio and Lazzaretto Nuovo (see above) were used as isolation or quarantine stations, set up to accommodate people wishing to enter Venice from overseas.

Despite these precautions, Venice was often struck by disease, most notably the plague. The churches of the Redentore and the Salute were built immediately after the two worst outbreaks, which hit the city in 1575 and 1630, in each case leaving some 30 percent of the population dead (although many had fled to the *terraferma*). As the pestilence raged, the *Serenissima* vowed to build temples in thanksgiving once it was over. The Scuola Grande di San Rocco was founded in the 15th century to venerate St Roch, who came to Italy to help cure plague victims, only to contract the disease himself (and when he dutifully went into isolation, he was soon cured by the angel depicted beside him in Bartolomeo Vivarini's altarpiece on the Giudecca; see p. 353). There is another fascinating painting of him, showing him at work in a *lazzaretto*, by Jacopo Tintoretto in the church of San Rocco. A statue of him by Alessandro Vittoria in San Francesco della Vigna stands beside another of St Sebastian, who from the 15th century onwards was considered to give protection from the plague and was often associated with St Roch, the healer. In the Salute, a painting by Titian shows the two saints together alongside St Mark. There are votive paintings celebrating escape from the terrible plague of 1630 in San Francesco della Vigna and San Lio.

Titian, who had lived to be 90, died during the plague of 1575.

Anianus saw the power of Mark's faith, he was converted to Christianity, receiving his baptism from Mark himself. As the first Christian in Alexandria, Anianus succeeded Mark as bishop of the city. He is always portrayed in a turban to denote his 'heathen' origins and as a reminder that the episode took place in Alexandria. At his death he was buried in a church named after him in Alexandria, but his body—like that of St Mark—was brought to Venice. Anianus's relics arrived in the city in 1288 and he was declared a saint.

SANTA MARIA GLORIOSA DEI FRARI



Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari (map p. 490, C3; basilicadeifrari.it), commonly known simply as 'The Frari', is the church of the mendicant order of Friars Minor, or Franciscans, and is dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin. In size it rivals the church of the other mendicant order, the Dominican foundation of San Zanicolo. It contains numerous masterpieces of painting and sculpture, including Titian's huge *Assumption* and his *Pala Pesaro* and, in the sacristy, one of Giovanni Bellini's most beautiful works, all the more moving for being still *in situ*. The church also has many important doges' tombs, a statue by Donatello, and a magnificent 15th-century choir.

The original Franciscan church was founded c. 1250, and the present brick Gothic church was begun c. 1330 but not finished until after 1443. The majestic campanile (the tallest in the city after St Mark's) dates from the second half of the 14th century. It stands in Campo dei Frari—really no more than a wide *calle*—which follows the flank of the huge church. The spacious Caffè del Dersut is a pleasant place for a coffee. Almost next door (no. 3007) is a little old-fashioned lace shop which has been here for several decades (without any pretension, it has very reasonable prices).

On the severe west front of the church, the Gothic doorway has sculptures attributed to Alessandro Vittoria (the *Risen Christ*, 1581) and the *Virgin and Child* and *St Francis* dating from the previous century and attributed to the workshop of Bartolomeo Bon the Younger. The other doorways have sculptures of *St Peter* and a fine 15th-century relief of the *Madonna and Child* with angels.

Interior of the Frari

The huge interior, some 90m long, is cruciform with an aisled nave of eight bays joined by wooden tie-beams. Titian's magnificent *Assumption* in the apse, at its most impressive when seen from the main west door, is framed by the arch of the monks' ritual choir.

(A) Ritual choir: The ritual choir extends into the nave as in many cathedrals in England and France, but it is rare to see this in Italian churches. The lovely **choir screen** (1475) is faced with Carrara marble and decorated with Istrian stone figures of saints and prophets in relief; above are ten apostles and a *Crucifixion between the Virgin and St John the Evangelist*, with angels as lecterns beside the two pulpits. Some scholars have suggested that all these are by Bartolomeo Bon and Pietro Lombardo but their attribution remains uncertain. The three tiers of magnificent **choir stalls** were carved by Marco Cozzi (1468) and have beautifully detailed intarsia decoration by Lorenzo and Cristoforo Canozzi.

(B) Sanctuary: The apse is lit by fine stained-glass windows and is filled with **Titian's *Assumption*** (1518) **(1)**, the largest altarpiece in Venice, celebrated among his masterpieces for its dramatic

movement and amazing colouring. A careful restoration, financed by Save Venice, was completed in 2022. One of the most memorable figures is that of the apostle dressed in red, seen from behind with his arms outstretched towards the Virgin, thus linking her and the cloud of putti to the earth (while one of the little feet of the lowest putto gracefully almost touches the head of another apostle). The Virgin's gesture suggests she is shocked into immobility as she leaves behind earthly matters and prepares herself to meet God the Father, who appears above as a somewhat menacing figure painted in very dark colours against the golden sky of Heaven.

The huge **tomb of Doge Niccolò Tron (2)** (d. 1473) is a perfectly proportioned monument by Antonio Rizzo. The doge, in office for just two uneventful years, was exceptionally tall and always wore a beard: he is first shown (on the lowest level) in a life-like portrait standing between two beautiful



the marbles once exhibited here by the Grimani (see box).

Sala a Fogliami (C): The **painting ceiling**, covered with the thick foliage and branches of trees delightfully interspersed with fruits and birds, is by Camillo Mantovano. Amongst the numerous plants, the painter included maize and tobacco, recently arrived from North America. The fighting birds are said to be an allusion to Giovanni Grimani's tussles with the Inquisition on the subject of heresy (see p. 322). The **portrait of Giovanni Grimani** by Tintoretto was acquired by the state in 2020.

Ante-Tribune (D): This room, with two 1st-century BC Greek amphorae and paintings by Aliense, prepares visitors for the experience of the sombrelly beautiful **Tribune (E)** designed by Giovanni Grimani to display some 130

masterpieces of Classical statuary. It is very well lit from a huge lantern skylight in the ceiling, from which hangs—as it did in the days of the Grimani—*Ganymede and Eagle*, a 2nd-century Roman copy of a Hellenistic original. All four walls have symmetrical displays of marble sculpture on shelves and in niches. Many of the original pieces, which had been taken to the Museo Archeologico, have been returned and arranged here as they used to be (although some have been substituted by casts) and handlists are available. Roman busts, statues and statuettes, mostly dating from the 2nd century AD and in some cases modelled directly on Greek prototypes, as well as reliefs, cinerary urns, candelabra, masks, herms and funerary stelae are part of the panoply. The statues and busts were sometimes restored in the Renaissance, and later busts were made to support earlier portrait heads. The *Satyr* (central niche

on the south side), for example, has a torso dating from the 3rd century BC but the rest is a Renaissance restoration (possibly by Tiziano Aspetti). In two other niches on this wall are a *Kore*, dated 435–430 BC, and a *Bacchante* dating from 130 BC. The arrangement was intended to be aesthetically pleasing rather than chronological and sometimes it is not even possible to tell if the work is ancient Roman or Renaissance. The final arrangement of sculptures here may change.

Sala Neoclassica (F): The decorations here were added for the wedding in 1791 of Giovanni Carlo Grimani and Virginia Chigi Albani, who came from a Roman patrician family. On the ceiling is a copy of the famous ancient Roman fresco of a marriage scene which used to belong to the Aldobrandini (and is now in the Vatican Museums). Above the door into the Tribune is a copy of



Birds amid maize and fruit trees, ceiling decoration by Camillo Mantovano.

the ancient Roman bust known as the *Grimani Vitellius* (see pp. 70–1).

THE GRIMANI FAMILY COLLECTIONS

Cardinal Domenico Grimani amassed a famous collection of Classical sculptures, part of which he donated to the Republic in 1523. The rest was kept in this palace until 1587, when some 200 pieces were arranged as a public gallery in the vestibule of the Biblioteca Marciana. At the death of the Cardinal's grandson Giovanni in 1593, these Greek and Roman works were also donated to the Republic and they formed one of the first museums of Classical antiquities in all Europe (they are still on public view, constituting the core of the collection of the Museo Archeologico; see p. 70). Domenico was an important collector in other fields, too: he purchased works by Hieronymus Bosch (today on display at the Gallerie dell'Accademia), Memling and Dürer; drawings by Leonardo; paintings by Raphael, Giorgione and Titian; and a breviary with 831 pages illuminated by Flemish artists in around 1500 (known as the Grimani Breviary, and now one of the most precious possessions of the Biblioteca Marciana). At the death of the last descendant of the family in 1865, all the works of art which remained in the palace were sold and dispersed.



Corte Pisani, with the Pisani family's shield above the entrance.

Go straight through the *campo* past the plaque and turn immediately right to come out on the pretty, tranquil **Rio Marin**, where the Bar Pasticceria Rio Marin is particularly good for cakes. Beyond it, the grand 18th-century **Palazzo Gradenigo** is decorated with female heads on its two *piani nobili*. Closer to hand is the smaller, buff-coloured **Palazzo Soranzo-Cappello**, dating from the previous century, with two rows of balconies and a tympanum on the top floor. Its formerly extensive garden is now partly occupied by a housing estate, designed by Giuseppe Samonà (1898–1983), who was director of IUAV after WWII. Now the headquarters of the Soprintendenza dei

Beni Culturali of the Veneto, the *palazzo* was the residence in the 19th century of the American writer Julia Constance Fletcher, a friend of Henry James. Her novel *Mirage*, published in 1877 under the pseudonym George Fleming, celebrates her friendship with Oscar Wilde. Ten years later, in 1887, Henry James took this palace as the setting for *The Aspern Papers*.

Return along Rio Marin and turn left up Calle Venezia into the little **Campiello delle Strope**, where there is a water fountain and a lovely old well-head dating from the late 14th or early 15th century, decorated with stylised acanthus leaves and rosettes, and a head in low relief of a man with a straggly beard. From here many of the *calli* lead to *rii* with no *fondamente* and no bridges, so that this is a little residential enclave.

Leaving the well behind you, a low, arched passageway links the *campiello* to the peaceful **Corte dell'Anatomia**, which recalls the site of an anatomical theatre thought to have been established here in 1507. From here **Ponte dell'Anatomia** leads back to Campo San Giacomo dall'Orto, where to your left a white building with green shutters occupies the site of a later anatomical theatre built in 1672 but which burnt down in 1800 (note the inscription above the door: 'DOM Medicorum Physicorum Collegium').

Leave the *campo* by **Calle del Tentor**, lined with shops and restaurants. At the end, **Rio di San Boldo** marks the limit of the *sestiere* of Santa Croce. From Fondamenta del Parucheta here, looking left, you can see the 17th-century Palazzo Grimani attached to the **old bell-tower of San Boldo** (a church which no longer exists, once dedicated to Sant'Ubaldo, an 11th–12th-

