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# THE GUIDE

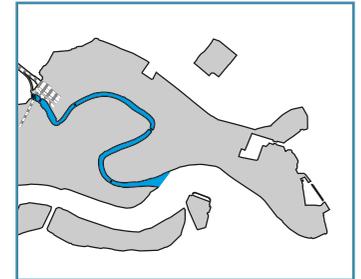
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# The Grand Canal

*The Grand Canal, over 3km long, is the main thoroughfare of Venice. This splendid waterway, winding like an inverted S through the city, is filled with every kind of boat, from water-buses (vaporetti) to motorboats, barges, sandoli propelled by oars, and gondolas. It is lined on either side with a continuous row of beautiful old buildings, including more than 100 palaces, the most important of which date from the 13th to the 17th centuries. The canal follows the old course of a branch of the Brenta as far as the Rialto.*

This chapter follows the Grand Canal as it is seen and appreciated from the water: the right bank is followed from San Marco to the railway station, and the opposite bank from the station back to San Marco. The comfortable vaporetto no. 1 travels slowly along the Canal, giving time to enjoy the magnificent scene, as well as the constant activity of the many types of boat on the water. It also provides an insight into the everyday life of the Venetians: from the extremely courteous and efficient sailors who run the water-buses to the local passengers, who stand out for their elegant dress and their quickened pace the moment they set foot on the bank.



## ARCHITECTURE ON THE GRAND CANAL

The architectural styles of the palaces usually betray their date. The earliest, dating from the 13th century and known as 'Veneto-Byzantine', still have narrow, rounded, stilted arches at water level and similar windows on the first floors, their shape copied from Byzantine buildings in the East. These façades are sometimes decorated with carved paterae, also typical of Constantinople. Unfortunately some of these venerable buildings were over-restored in the 19th century. As the round arches become more pointed, so the buildings take on a Gothic appearance and, as Ruskin noted with great precision, there are numerous varieties of these Gothic shapes in the windows of Venetian palaces. Venetian Gothic, one of the most characteristic styles to be found on *palazzi* all over the city, lasted throughout the 14th and for most of the 15th centuries,



**RIALTO BRIDGE**  
Detail of the Angel Gabriel by Agostino Rubini (16th century).

### The interior

A heavy red curtain hangs at the old-fashioned entrance to the dimly-lit interior, which is one of the most evocative places in the city, with an atmosphere that is redolent of old Venice. The walls of the famous little room are entirely decorated with a delightful series of paintings by Vittore Carpaccio (carried out between 1502 and 1508), relating to the lives of the three Dalmatian patron saints, Jerome, Tryphon and George, and bursting with detail, incident and symbolism.

### VITTORE CARPACCIO

Carpaccio (1460–1525/6), the greatest Venetian narrative painter in the later 15th and early 16th centuries, produced his masterpiece for this *scuola*. He also worked for other *scuole* in the city, including that of Sant'Orsola (his nine paintings illustrating the *Legend of St Ursula* are now in the Gallerie dell'Accademia), and San Giovanni Evangelista (the *Miracle at the Rialto Bridge* or *Cure of a Lunatic by the Patriarch of Grado* is also now in the Accademia). Although influenced by the Bellini family (with whom he worked in the Doge's Palace on paintings subsequently lost in a fire), he had his own remarkable sense of colour and an eye for detail, and his works reflect an atmosphere of great calm. His famous painting of *Two Venetian Ladies* on a balcony is preserved in the Museo Correr. Carpaccio was the earliest Italian master of genre painting, and numerous details in his paintings give a particularly vivid picture of Venice and the Venetians at the end of the 15th century.

**Left wall:** The *Duel of St George and the Dragon* is justly one of Carpaccio's best-known paintings. It shows St George wounding the dragon with his lance. Scattered all around are the bones and severed limbs of the dragon's victims; snakes and lizards hiss and spit at the spectacle. The *Triumph of St George* follows, showing the blond-haired knight, his sword raised and holding the dragon by the princess's girdle, about to kill the beast. The king, queen and princess look on, while exotic musicians celebrate. Although the dragon appears defeated, the horses pull their heads back and shy away, obviously still nervous.

**End wall:** *St George Baptising the People of Silene* (the rescued king and princess kneel before St George, a white lurcher memorably in the foreground); and *The*

*Miracle of St Tryphon* (the boy saint is freeing the daughter of the emperor from a demon, in the form of a basilisk).

**Right wall:** *Agony in the Garden*—Christ prays on the hillside, while the disciples lie stretched out and fast asleep—and the *Calling of St Matthew*. Another famous panel is the *Lion Led by St Jerome into the Monastery*, putting the terrified monks to flight, their habits streaming behind them, though the lion himself looks docile enough and bemused by all the fuss.

The *Funeral of St Jerome* is a touching depiction of the ceremony, with the lion throwing back his head in a final roar of grief. The last panel, the *Vision of St Augustine*, depicts the story of St Augustine writing a letter to St Jerome asking for his advice on a book he wanted to write about the saints in

Paradise. St Jerome's death occurred at the same time, and Augustine's studio was suddenly filled with light and he heard a voice reproaching him for daring to describe Paradise before his own death. Carpaccio shows us in great detail the inside of a monk's study, with its neatly arranged bookcase and scientific instruments, and a little white dog looking up at its master. The six-winged seraph in the painting's mosaic altarpiece is reminiscent of that in Bellini's *San Giobbe Altarpiece* (see p. 147).

The *Madonna and Child* is attributed to Carpaccio's son, Benedetto.

**Upper floor:** The room was decorated in the 17th century and has a prettily carved and gilded wood ceiling incorporating paintings attributed to Andrea Vicentino, and a 16th-century carved wood altarpiece of *St George*.

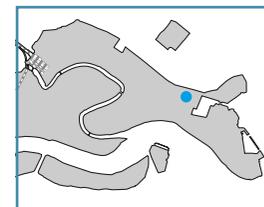
**Sacristy:** The treasury of the guild (including a 15th-century processional Cross) is kept here (on the ground floor).

Also reached off the Rio Sant'Agostino is the huge deconsecrated church of **San Lorenzo** (map p. 403, E4), which has been closed for many years. The first church, on a basilican plan, was founded by the Particiaco doges in the 9th century. Marco Polo (1256–1324) was buried here, but his sarcophagus was lost when the church was rebuilt in 1592 by Simone Sorella.

## SAN FRANCESCO DELLA VIGNA

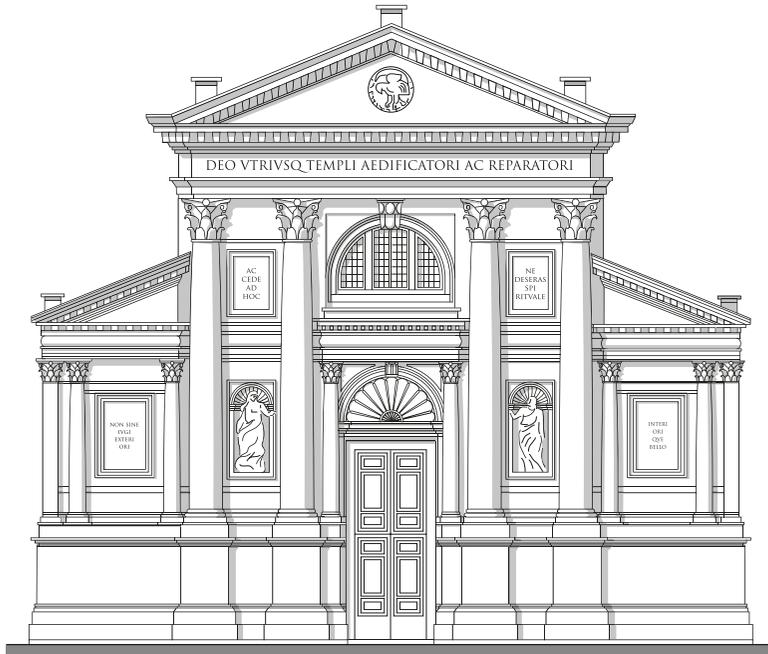
Map p. 403, E3–F3. Open 8–12 & 3–7; coin-operated lights.

The name of this church recalls the vineyard bequeathed to the Franciscan order for a convent in 1253 by Marco Ziani, son of Doge Pietro Ziani. On this site, in 1534, Doge Andrea Gritti laid the foundation stone of the present church to be built by his friend Jacopo Sansovino. The humanist friar Francesco Zorzi was involved in the design, which is based on a complicated harmony of the progression of the number three.



### THE CHURCH FAÇADE

In 1562 Giovanni Grimani, Patriarch of Aquileia (see p. 271), paid for the façade to be added by Palladio. His design was entirely innovative in church architecture, using the Classical elements of columns and pediments derived from ancient temples, which were to be employed with even greater success in his other two churches in Venice, San Giorgio Maggiore and the Redentore. Although the high relief and brightness of the Istrian stone demand our attention, it is difficult fully to appreciate the splendid design, since the church is sited in a rather cramped space. Above the door is one of the architect's typical Diocletian windows, which allows light into the nave. The medallion in the pediment bearing an eagle (symbol of Aquileia and of St John the Evangelist)



SAN FRANCESCO DELLA VIGNA

and the inscriptions between the columns were ordered specifically by Grimani both to record the spiritual significance of the church and as a glorification of his own devotion. The two statues, *Moses* and *St Paul*, in contrasting dark bronze, added in 1592, stand out as the only colour on the façade. They are by Tiziano Aspetti, who is known principally for his works in this medium.

The bell-tower, which rises behind the east end (and is thus difficult to see close to), is one of the highest and slenderest in Venice, recalling that of St Mark's. It served as an aid to navigators in the northern lagoon during the days of the Republic, and its bells were tolled to announce meetings of the Great Council in the Doge's Palace. Built in 1581, but repeatedly struck by lightning, it has been carefully restored over the centuries.

### THE CHURCH INTERIOR

The broad nave has five side chapels between Doric pilasters on either side and a long chancel (with the monks' choir behind the altar).

**South transept:** The most memorable work in the entire church is a *Madonna and Child (A)*, the only known work by Antonio da Negroponte, an artist

about which nothing is known except that he was a friar and a native of the Greek island of Euboea (known as Negroponte under the Venetians). It is

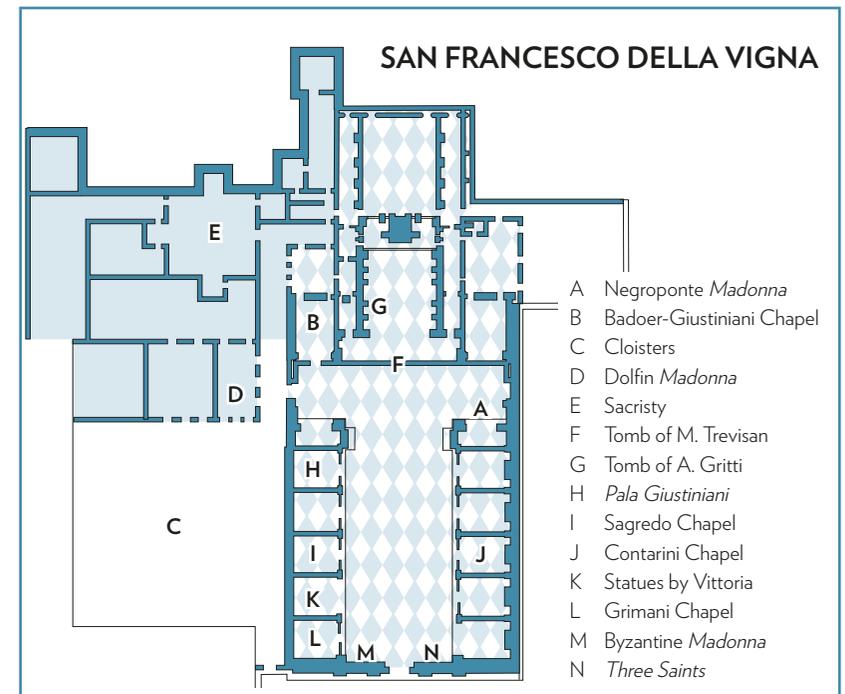
an exceptionally large painting with a charming *Madonna* in a rich brocade robe sitting on an intricately carved throne beneath a garland of fruit and in front of a dark wood of pomegranate trees, with a great variety of birds on the lawn at her feet. Painted around 1465, it represents one of the last great paintings in the florid Gothic style which had persisted in Venice under the influence of Antonio Vivarini. The *God the Father* in the lunette is by Benedetto Rusconi (Diana).

**North transept:** The **Badoer-Giustiniani Chapel (B)** belonged to the procurator Lorenzo Giustiniani and his brother Antonio and was designed in the 1530s by the architect of the

church, Jacopo Sansovino. He decorated it with a series of very fine 15th-century sculpted reliefs by Pietro Lombardo and his two sons Antonio and Tullio, which had been removed from the earlier church where they were probably part of the choir screen. On the two side walls, rectangles bear reliefs of prophets and the four Evangelists, above which are scenes from the life of Christ. The same artists worked on the altarpiece.

A door leads out past a glass door through which you can see one of the two 15th-century **cloisters (C)**, still in very good condition.

**Dolphin Madonna and Sacristy:** In a peaceful little chapel (**D**) is a charming small painting of the *Madonna and*

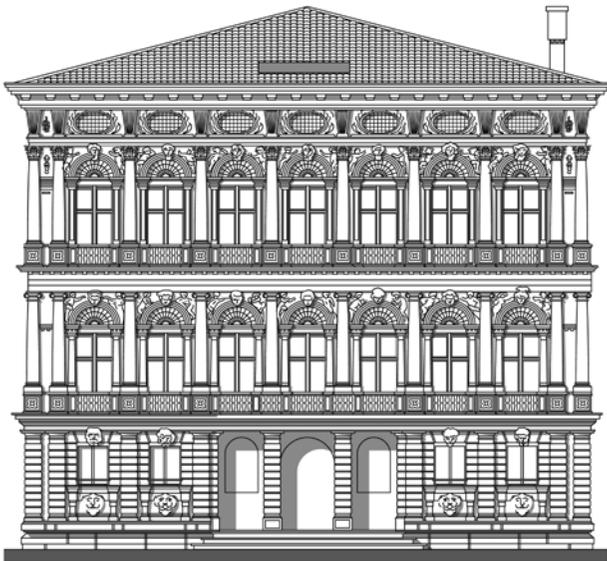
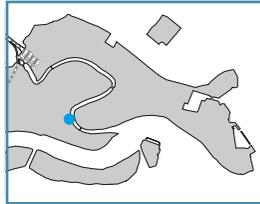


In the lively **Campo San Barnaba** (map p. 409, D2) is the church of the same name, rebuilt modestly in the 18th century, at a time when funds were in short supply as this part of town was home to the ‘*Barnabotti*’, noblemen fallen on hard times who subsisted on state charity in boarding houses here. The name of the restaurant and pizzeria Casin dei Nobili (just under the archway at the back of the *campo*) recalls them. Though the church of San Barnaba retains many of its ecclesiastical furnishings, it is now used as a private exhibition space.

## CA' REZZONICO

Map p. 409, D2. Open 10–5 except Tues. The palace has a landing-stage on the Grand Canal (*vaporetto* no. 1), from which a bridge leads directly to its water entrance. Its land entrance is reached by *Fondamenta Rezzonico* along *Rio San Barnaba*. The collection is extremely well labelled, also in English.

Ca' Rezzonico is one of the most important 17th–18th-century palaces in Venice, with a monumental façade on the Grand Canal. It was begun by Baldassare Longhena c. 1667, and then modified (and the upper storey added) by Giorgio Massari for the Rezzonico family soon after they bought it in 1751, a few years before Carlo Rezzonico became Pope Clement XIII. They also commissioned its splendid frescoed ceilings from Giambattista Tiepolo,



Giovanni Battista Crosato, Gaspare Diziani and Jacopo Guarana. The last member of the Rezzonico family died in 1810, and the palace changed hands frequently in the 19th century, when both Whistler and Sargent had studios here. In 1888 it was purchased by Robert Browning's son, Pen, and the great poet died here on 12th December 1889.

First opened to the public in 1936, it now houses the Museo del Settecento Veneziano, the city's collection of 18th-century art, displayed in rooms decorated in the most sumptuous 18th-century style.

### GROUND FLOOR

Behind a pretty fountain (enjoyed by some huge goldfish), the garden was redesigned in the 20th century by Giorgio Bellavitis with a pergola and box hedges (it has numerous benches which are pleasant places to rest). Off the fine *androne* and courtyard is the grand staircase by Giorgio Massari (one of the putti representing *Winter* on the banister is signed by Juste le Court).

### FIRST FLOOR

**Room 1 (Ballroom):** The chandeliers are 18th century and the elaborate frescoes are by Giovanni Battista Crosato and Pietro Visconti. There are some vase-stands and colossal statues of Ethiopian warriors with white glass eyes, part of a set of furniture carved by Andrea Brustolon (*see Room II*).

**Room 2:** The splendid ceiling fresco is an allegory of the marriage of Ludovico Rezzonico and Faustina Savorgnan in 1758, painted the same year by Giambattista Tiepolo, one of his last works carried out in Venice, with the help of his son Gian Domenico (the *quadratura* is by Gerolamo Mengozzi-Colonna). The portrait of Francesco Falier as *Procurator da Mar* is by Bernardino Castelli (1786). There is a little **chapel (3)** off this room.

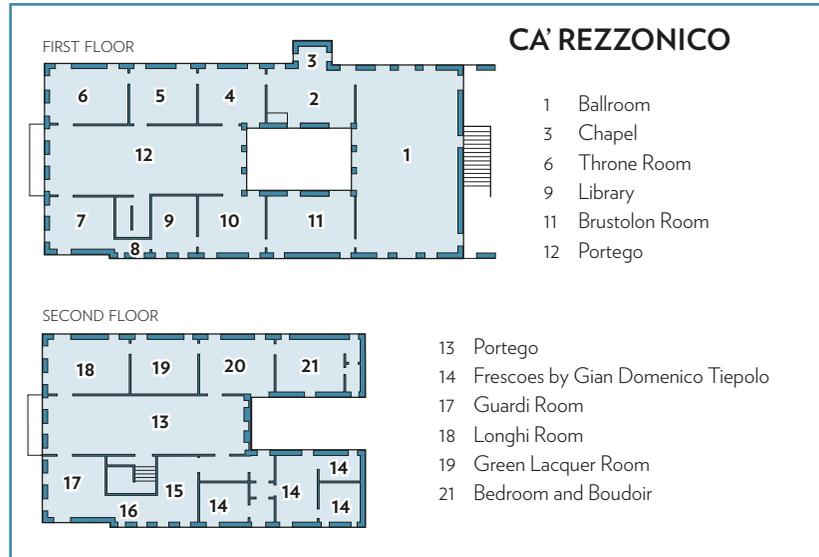
**Room 4:** Pastels and miniatures by Rosalba Carriera, and a portrait of Cecilia Guardi, Giambattista Tiepolo's wife, painted by their son Lorenzo in 1757. When she sat for this portrait she

was already an elderly woman, but she is bedecked with magnificent jewels. The ceiling painting of the *Triumph of Poetry* is by Gaspare Diziani (1757).

**Room 5:** The room has an 18th-century lacquer-work door and 17th-century Flemish tapestries. The *Allegory of Virtue* on the ceiling is by Jacopo Guarana.

**Room 6 (Throne Room):** This sumptuous room overlooks the Grand Canal. The ceiling painting of the *Allegory of Merit* is by Giambattista Tiepolo. An elaborate frame (c. 1730) surrounds the portrait of Pietro Barbarigo by Bernardino Castelli. The furniture is attributed to Antonio Corradini.

**Room 7:** The very fine painting on the ceiling depicting *Nobility and Virtue Overcoming Ignorance* was painted by Giambattista Tiepolo in 1745 for Palazzo Barbarigo on the Grand Canal and moved here in 1936. The page holding



the train of 'Nobility' is thought to be a portrait of Tiepolo's son Giuseppe Maria, who became a priest.

**Passageway (8):** Here are some small wood sculptures by Brustolon (the *Magdalene* and an equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius).

**Room 9 (Library):** In the 17th-century bookcases are displayed 18th-century *bozzetti* in clay and terracotta by Giovanni Maria Morleiter.

**Room 10:** Here is a large painting by Gregorio Lazzarini, and one by Antonio Molinari. On the ceiling are five paintings in pretty oval frames by Francesco Maffei from Vicenza.

**Room 11:** The remarkable furniture is part of a 40-piece set carved out of ebony and boxwood before 1706 for the Venier family palace by Andrea

Brustolon. It includes armchairs and vase-stands made for Pietro Venier's collection of Chinese porcelain. The most celebrated piece is the vase-stand with Hercules and Moors. The colossal statues displayed in the Ballroom are also part of this set. Brustolon was the most important wood sculptor at work in the Veneto in the Baroque period. Born in Belluno, most of his works are still in buildings near that town. Other carvings by him can be seen in one of the synagogues in the Ghetto, in Palazzetto Bru Zane, and in the sacristies of the Redentore and the Frari. A terracotta *bozzetto* by him of the *Death of St Francesco Saverio* (1723) is at present exhibited in the Ca' d'Oro. On the ceiling are more paintings by Maffei, and a beautiful Murano chandelier (c. 1730).

**Room 12 (Portego):** Decorated with 18th-century busts, and with two atlantes by Alessandro Vittoria.

## SECOND FLOOR

**Room 13 (Portego):** Arranged as a picture gallery, this displays the most important paintings in the collection: a contrived landscape incorporating some Roman monuments by Luca Carnevalis; a large historical canvas with the *Death of Darius* by Giovanni Battista Piazzetta (and works by his pupil Giuseppe Angeli); landscapes by Giuseppe Zais,

and works by Giovanni Antonio Guardi and Gian Antonio Pellegrini. The two Venetian views by Canaletto are early works dating from the 1720s: they were acquired in 1983 and are the only views of Venice by Canaletto owned by the city (although there are also a few of his paintings in the Gallerie dell'Accademia).

### CANALETTO AND THE VEDUTISTI

Giovanni Antonio Canal, always known as Canaletto, was born into an old Venetian family in 1697. On his first trip to London in 1746 he carried with him a letter of introduction from his most important patron, Consul Smith, who lived in Venice (see p. 331). His fame and thriving market in England was due entirely to Smith, who in the mid-1720s had already commissioned six paintings of Piazza San Marco and the Piazzetta from Canaletto and went on to purchase no fewer than 50 of his paintings (as well as 143 drawings). The business arrangement between the two endured throughout Canaletto's life, and Smith then sold all of his Canalettos to George III, so that today the best collection of his work is in the British royal collections.

The artist also worked in London for around ten years, producing many splendid views of the city and the Thames. Influenced by the views and *capricci*, or imaginary scenes, invented by Luca Carnevalis, he produced many *vedute* of his native city, which came to symbolise its appearance for decades (and are still considered by many to represent the essence of Venice). He was to influence generations of British landscape painters and watercolourists and, through his nephew and most brilliant pupil, Bernardo Bellotto (who worked as court painter in Dresden), his influence extended to the northern European schools as well. A Venetian view by Bellotto can be seen in the Gallerie dell'Accademia. Canaletto was an excellent draughtsman and may have used a camera obscura as an aid to accuracy (his only complete sketchbook survives in the Accademia, although it is not usually on view). He also made a set of very fine etchings and dedicated them to Consul Smith.

Francesco Guardi, born in Venice in 1712 into a family of painters, became a highly successful painter of Venetian *vedute* and *capricci*, a typical 18th-century genre, many of which he painted for British aristocrats. His delightful paintings also record ceremonies in Venice and villas in the Veneto. After his death in 1793 he was forgotten and only rediscovered in France in the mid-19th century. Guardi's work is better represented in his native city than that of Canaletto.

**Room 14:** This charming series of rooms was created in 1936 in an attempt to reconstruct the frescoed rooms of the

simple little Villa di Zianigo, near Mira in the Veneto. This had been purchased by Giambattista Tiepolo in the 1750s,



## GHETTO NUOVO

Inscribed sign above the door of a famous old pawn shop.

was erected by pupils of Longhena. The elaborate wood carving of the ceiling and pulpit is by Andrea Brustolon.

## GHETTO NUOVO

Ponte di Ghetto Vecchio leads over to the island of Ghetto Nuovo (*map p. 400, C2*), the oldest area of the Ghetto, where large buildings were erected in the mid-15th century by a Venetian merchant around a huge courtyard with three wells. The *campo* (on the site of that courtyard), still with the three wells and with a scattering of trees and benches, is now partly surrounded by tall 17th-century houses with numerous windows: some have as many as seven floors. Here, on the upper floors, are three more synagogues: above a 19th-century portico of four columns is the **Scuola Italiana** (1575); it has a cupola and five windows recalling the Pentateuch. The interior dates mostly from 1739, but also has elements from other periods, from the early 17th to the mid-19th centuries. In the far corner of the *campo* is the **Scuola Canton** (1531), with its tiny wooden cupola just visible. This is the synagogue generally used by the Jewish community in Venice today. Its name may be derived from its corner position, or from the name of a family (Cantono des Juif). It was connected by a passageway with the Scuola Italiana. The **Scuola Grande Tedesca**, the oldest synagogue in Venice (1528), is entered by a 19th-century staircase above the Jewish Museum (no. 2902b), founded by Vittorio Fano in the early 20th century, which has a well-labelled display of Jewish treasures (mostly 17th–18th century). The **museum** has a café and well-stocked bookshop (*for admission see p. 241*).

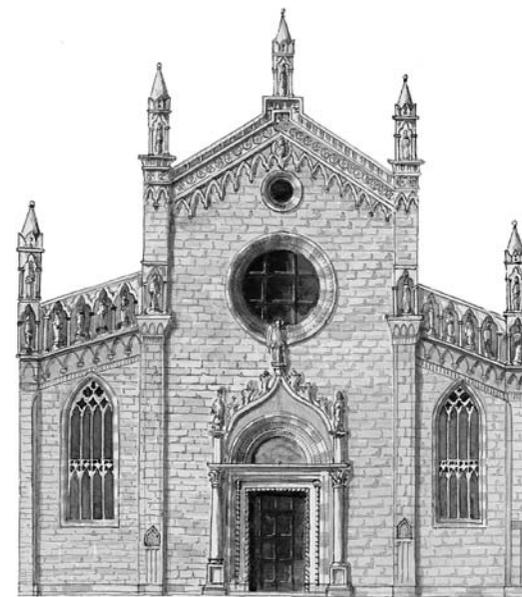
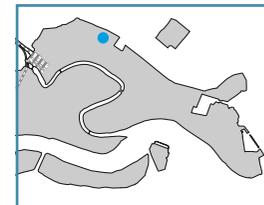
On a wall opposite the museum, **bronze memorial reliefs** were set up in 1985 in honour of Jewish war victims, many of whom were deported to concentration camps in Germany; another memorial dates from 1993: both are by the Lithuanian-born artist Arbit Blatas. A hospice for the poor was founded here in 1890. It later became an old people's home and is now a simple hotel, with a garden of pomegranates. At no. 2912, under a portico, is the site of a pawn shop, known as the **Banco Rosso**. This was one of three such shops here run by the Jews, along with banking and exchange offices and the offices of money-lenders, all of which were busy during the day with Venetian clients. A passageway (where the doors which closed the Ghetto at night once stood) leads into the **Ghetto Nuovissimo**, added in 1633, with more tall houses.

An iron bridge (guarded by two old sentry boxes) with decorative wrought-iron railings (1865–6) leads out of the Ghetto to Fondamenta degli Ormesini.

## MADONNA DELL'ORTO

*Map p. 401, E2. Open Mon–Sat 10–5. The campo and adjoining area are described in the guided walk on p. 246.*

The church of the Madonna dell'Orto was the parish church of Jacopo Tintoretto, who is buried here. It contains some of his most important works. The first church on this site, dedicated to St Christopher, was founded around 1350 by Fra' Tiberio da Parma, general of the Umiliati order of Benedictines. After 1377 it became known as the Madonna dell'Orto from a miraculous statue of the *Madonna and Child*, which had been abandoned in a nearby orchard (and is still kept in the church).



The façade is a fine example of 15th-century Venetian Gothic, with good tracery in the windows, and statues thought to be by some of the most important sculptors working in the city at that time, but which still await definitive attributions. In order of date they include: the Apostles in the niches (attributed to the Dalle Masegne brothers), the *Madonna and Annunciatory Angel* flanking the doorway (attributed as early works to Antonio Rizzo), and *St Christopher* above (once attributed, as a late work, to Bartolomeo Bon, but now usually thought to be by the workshop of Niccolò di Giovanni Fiorentino). The campanile (1503), with its onion-shaped cupola, is a conspicuous feature of the skyline when seen from the lagoon towards Murano.

## A WALK THROUGH CASTELLO

This walk covers part of the extreme eastern end of the city, through a peaceful district where many Venetians still live. The solitary church of San Pietro di Castello, once the cathedral of Venice, preserves some interesting works of art.

ACROSS THE BRIDGE FROM RIVA SAN Biagio, the long, broad **Via Garibaldi** leads away from the waterfront. As the pavement shows, the street was created by filling in a canal. It was laid out by order of Napoleon in 1808. It is a lively street, with a miscellany of local shops and stalls, selling everything from clothes to food, and including (at no. 1311) the popular Bottegon, which boasts that it stocks over 20,000 household items—something very easy to believe once you penetrate its treasure-trove. The house at the beginning of the right (plaque) was the residence of the navigators John Cabot (1420–98) and his son Sebastian (1477–1537), who were the first to touch the American mainland and explore its coast, from Hudson’s Bay to Florida.

Corte Nuova opens on the left, with two twin well-heads and with a view of the Arsenale buildings in the distance. The **church of San Francesco da Paola** (usually open 8–12 & 4–7) was founded in 1588 as a convent for the Minim Friars (the order founded by St Francesco da Paola) by the Neapolitan Carafa-Caracciolo family, since they were astonished to find no church dedicated to the patron saint of sailors when they visited the city. They commissioned the ceiling paintings from Giovanni Contarini, who included the family arms four times to commemorate its four most illustrious members. There is an

interesting series of paintings around the top of the walls, added in the 18th century by leading artists including Gian Domenico Tiepolo (the second on the right, depicting the *Liberation of a Soul Possessed*). The church contains three paintings by Palma Giovane (the best of which is in the chapel to the right of the presbytery).

Opposite the church, at no. 1310, the Gothic portal of the **Ospedale de le Pute** survives, dating from c. 1375. It has sculptures of the *Redeemer*, and, below, *Sts Dominic, Andrew and Peter Martyr*, perhaps by a pupil of Filippo Calendario, who is thought also to have worked on the Doge’s Palace. The hospice for girls was founded by Doge Marino Zorzi in 1311, and only the façade remains. It stood next to the church and convent of San Domenico, used after 1560 as a residence for officials of the Inquisition, but which was destroyed by Napoleon when he asked his favourite architect, Giovanni Antonio Selva, to lay out the public gardens here in 1808–12. They extend to the waterfront and adjoin the Biennale gardens. **Garibaldi’s statue** by Augusto Benvenuti dates from 1885. The tepidarium glasshouse was restored in 2010 and there is a garden centre where plants are sold, and a pleasant café.

Via Garibaldi ends at the picturesque **Rio di Sant’Anna**, where a fruit and vegetable barge is moored. Number 1132 on the right is a Gothic house with

