

October 2021

Dreaming of Venice

A photo journal and travelogue

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Video journal



DREAMING OF

Venice

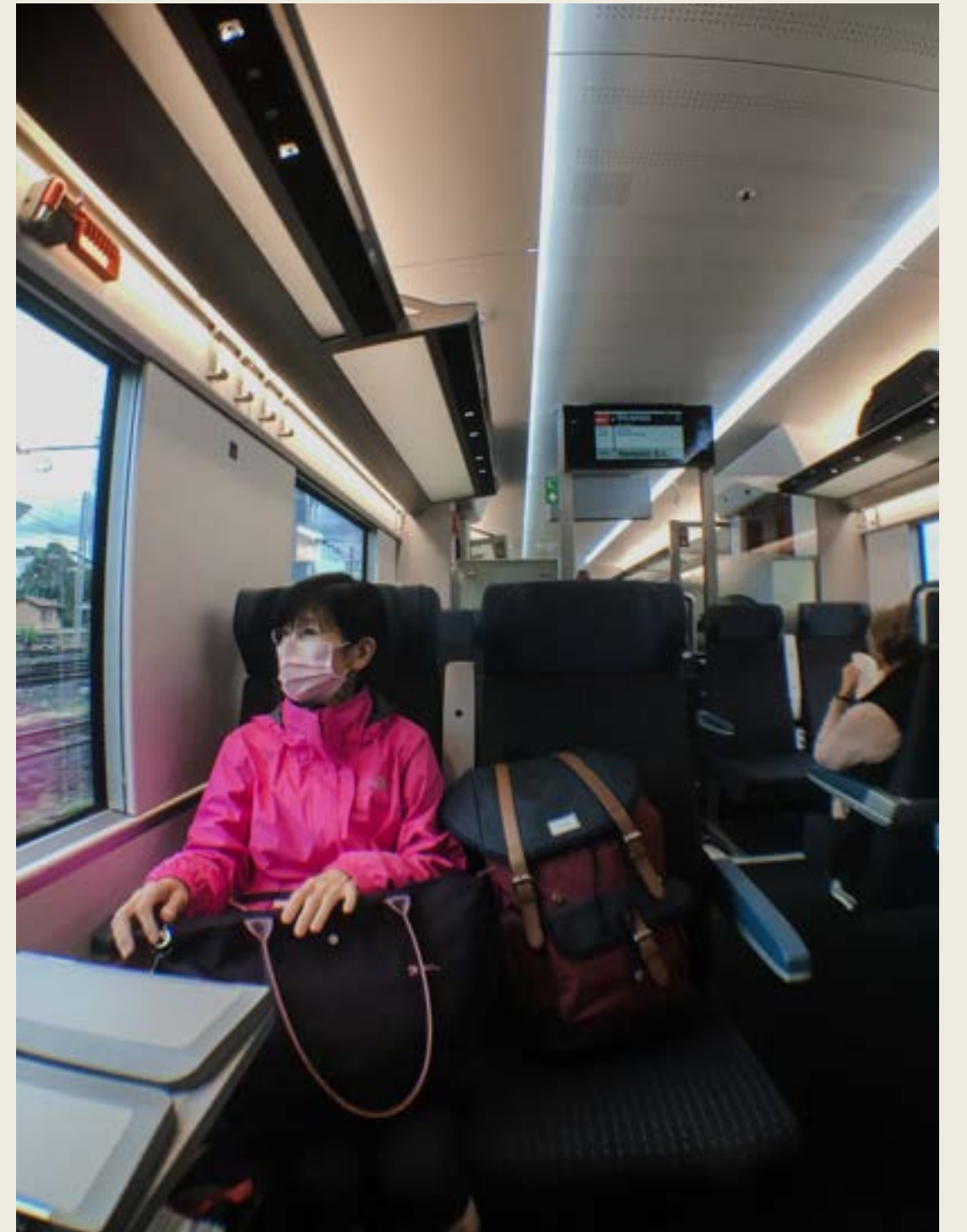
OCTOBER 2021

<https://youtu.be/JNplTrrglvE>

What's an adventure without a hiccup or two?

*So I pre-purchased the wrong train ticket ...Darn! Venice, Han, not Verona!
But, as I mentioned in Miles Across Milan, we secured a free transfer to Venice on a
brand new frecciarosa that started its journey from Zurich that morning.*

*As the train neared Venezia Santa Lucia, we caught sight of a rainbow arched over
the Italian lagoon. Had we booked the right tickets, we'd have missed this! I take full
credit (blame?). The rainbow was only the beginning of the beauty we'd behold. Steps
outside of the train station, our jaws dropped. We hadn't gotten to the heart of
Venice's winding, narrow streets and gondola-filled canals, but the view was already
full of Venetian charm. With the wide-eyed excitement of teenage girls, my mom and
I instinctively pulled our phones out and snapped away. The heaviness of our
backpacks completely vacated our attention.*





Day 3

The October evening unfolded quickly as we caught a vaporetto (public waterbus) to our hotel near Piazza di San Marco. As the boat gently cruised through the Grand Canal, layers of soft pink and purple streaked across the sky like watercolors and reflected off Gothic-style buildings. Murmurs of admiration in German and Italian blended in with the motor's hum and the sound of wind flapping trench coats. Over my shoulder, I heard someone ask, with a touch of French, "How do you like your camera?" and found myself discussing gear with a fellow traveller.

After checking in to Royal San Marco Hotel, whose convenient location served us well, we chose Il Chianti among the other restaurants that tried to lure us in. (Note about Venice: it's a tourist destination, so don't spend too much energy trying to find a secret hole-in-the-wall or mom-and-pop-run joint). The server, Andrea, joked with every table and embraced my efforts to learn a few new Italian words. He left us with the kind of cheer unique to the fail-proof combination of good food, rosé, and warm hospitality. Surrounded by the piazza's twinkling lights, live piano covers of pop songs dueled for our attention. Restaurant hosts in sharp, white tuxedos chatted to others from neighboring restaurants. I would have tried to snap a few photos of them, but my hands were occupied with creamy gelato, my kind of a nightcap.





Day 4

Venice offered countless places to see and we had so little time. Some pre-planning helped, since the city was full of tourists and lines to wait in. We arrived to La Basilica di San Marco prior to opening and joined a sizeable queue snaking across la piazza. While waiting, we admired the basilica's exteriors: it was richly bordered with gothic carvings, held by rare marble columns spanning a range of pastels, crowned with soft blue onion domes, embellished imaginatively with gold mosaics and lion motifs. All around us, we heard and noticed signs in French, German, English, and Spanish. While the basilica's line moved quickly, the one for Palazzo Ducale trudged slowly. Those planning visits to the palace might want to weigh the benefits of a pricey skip-the-line ticket or download a few informational podcasts to make good use of the 1.5 hour wait. It's well worth the visit; the views from the inside looking out over Venice's salmon pink cityscape were some of my favorites.





Campanile di San Marco





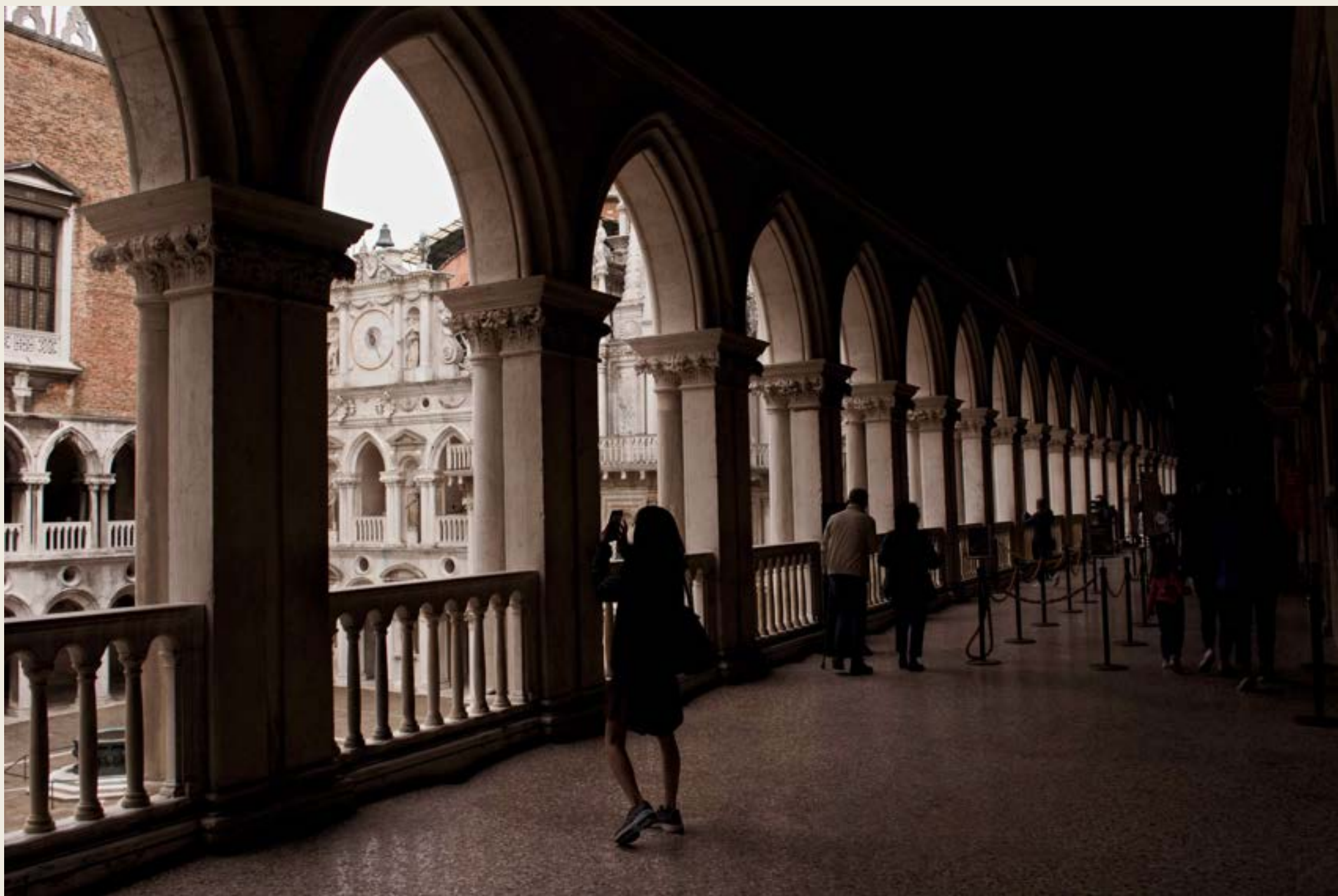
Basilica di San Marco



Architectural digest





















Day 4, cont'd.

After a few hours, we grabbed a quick lunch. (Note to self: avoid restaurants with set price lunch deals, menu disclaimers about frozen ingredients, and service staff who look bored! Each factor individually may not break the deal, but the sum of the parts equals a recipe for disappointment.)

No matter, more room in our bellies for snacking our way through the city. As we walked the city from end to end, searching for places to take a rapid antigen test prior to my return flight, we sampled cicchettis and ate gelato in the cold rain. When in Italy! Our feet wandered to Libreria Acqua Alta, a cozy (read: crowded) bookstore full of vintage postcards and Italian books. Was it worth it? Well, I'm not sure I'd go again, but I'm glad we did.











Color study: rosy pinks, burnt sienna, lagoon blue





Libreria Acqua Alta



Eyes

Day 4, cont'd.

We wandered across canals and took photos for hours, totaling 7.3 miles. It felt odd thinking people live there, among the other-worldly architecture and swarms of tourists. On a particularly quaint bridge near Palazzo Ruzzini, a sweet French gentleman and his wife offered to take our photos. The day had been tainted by a few encounters with locals that left more to be desired, but it picked up from there. Paolo, a venerated leather book binder who sells hand-bound notebooks, journals, and photo albums, was absolutely delighted to have his portrait taken. He caught my attention while engrossed in a conversation with two American students. As they explained that their friends recommended a visit his store, he eagerly asked them to translate a few phrases of a poem from English to Italian (Google Translate was involved). What. A. Sweet. Man.

On a whim, we decided to explore the neighborhood near Santa Maria della Salute, but it was residential and empty. Gusts of wind grew stronger and we watched a pink and purple sunset paint the sky, grateful to be entertained while waiting for the next boat to cross the canal. That evening, our weary feet led us to Rossopomodoro for Neapolitan pizza and gracious service from staff whose kindness was unfazed by their busyness. Rossopomodoro is a chain found across Europe, and don't let that deter you from visiting. We found the experience to be far removed from previous ones at other chain restaurants.



The bridge where the kind French couple stopped to take our photos!



Campo Santa Maria Formosa



An Aperol afternoon, captured from Rialto Bridge



Exploring Cannaregio





Simona Iacovazzi (jewel designer) and Paolo Olbi (keeper of the Venetian book-binding tradition)



Window shopping for pastries, cicchettis, dinner at Rosso Pomodoro





Rainy October evening near Punta della Dogana



Unexpected sunset from Santa Maria della Salute



Day 5

(We spent the morning at Piazzale Roma's Red Cross and the rest of the day visiting the nearby Venetian Islands, Burano and Murano. More to come in another travelogue!)

This Friday evening in Venice gave off a notably different energy. The city's personality was coming alive at golden hour. Kids played soccer in the squares, parents escorted their children home from school on scooters or bikes, older adults paused to chat with friends and storeowners, animal lovers walked their designer dogs. My mom and I stopped by a few bakeries, one for an apricot pasticcini and another in Ghetto Ebraico for apricot and cocoa orecchiette, and a marzipan-filled impade, a cookie unique to Venice's Sephardi community. While waiting in line, we admired a little boy successfully convince his mom to buy him a giant meringue. Evening set, and we found ourselves wandering for a place to eat (a theme as common to us as Venice's lions). Pako's Pizza + Pasta served up fresh, piping hot pasta in takeout containers for about 7€ each. Another 7.1 miles for the books.







Glimpses of everyday Italian rhythms



The narrowest street in Venice



The streets alive on a Friday evening







Day 6

Our final morning, we attempted to wake up early (but not early enough) to see the sunrise. Professional photographers had telephoto lenses and tripods all set up by the time we arrived to see the sky transition from a soft violet and creamy pink to radiant orange and gold. The sun was finally breaking through after several rainy days! We rode the vaporetto to San Giorgio Island and mingled among a German tour group at the top of the tower. There isn't much to do on the island, but the view of Venice was spectacular.

When we arrived back to Venice, we took a traghetto for 2€ per person. While a private 40-minute gondola costs about 80€ for up to six people, a 3-minute commuter's ride from one side of the Grand Canal to the other, via a traghetto, is a more affordable way to taste the experience without the high price tag and a gondolier's serenade. To savor our last few hours, we wandered and observed the Italian weekend routine: grab a drink at a café with a view of a square and people watch. A few days prior, from Palazzo Ducale, Venice was pink and red. This afternoon, it glowed orange and yellow.







Photographers en masse at sunrise





Can you imagine a life where the predominant form of transportation (of anything) is boat?



*House to Watch the Sunset: sculpture-architecture (SCARCH)
by Not Vital on exhibit at Abbazia di San Giorgio Maggiore*







First attempt capturing and stitching a panorama











Gondolier in the early morning (left). Lucky shot of the gondolier during our traghetto ride (right).



Italian afternoon tradition: grab a drink and a view of the piazza.



Dolce far niente, the sweetness of doing nothing.

Day 6, cont'd.

As we made our way back to the hotel to pick up our bags and catch a vaporetto for the train station, we discovered that nearly all the routes to our hotel were flooded. The high tide had come in, and the water level was the highest we'd seen. None of the wood plank bridges led to our hotel and we were not going to buy plastic bag "boots" for 10€ per pair. Countless turns and GPS recalculations later, we found a back alley that led to the hotel and grabbed our items. Time was on our side. We had just enough to pay a quick visit to Venchi, an Italian chocolate company I discovered through a grad school buddy. The Venezuelan employee working charmed us as he served spoonfuls of molten giandua from a fountain. Yes, we most definitely purchased chocolate to go!

(From there, we boarded another frecciarosa back to Milan and spent our last full day at Lake Como.

More to come!)



Piazza di San Marco under water





Video journal



POSTCARDS FROM

San Giorgio Island

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<https://youtu.be/hWNT-MRfPao>



Thanks for following along!

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