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travel

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Quick-fix weekends

Paris, Rome, Barcelona & more... how to soak them up in just three days

Value For Money Awards

From flights to sights — 2018's biggest bargains revealed

Tanzania

Get thrillingly close with a Serengeti safari on foot

California

The hippest road trip in the west — all worked out

Plus

Venice, Lisbon, Auckland — and how to save 48% on your hotel room (see p.34)

Maldives

Why let the honeymooners hog paradise? We know the 24 best resorts for everyone

Japan

Take the path less travelled to its ancient heartland



Best beds: Venice

Groovy Grand Canal getaway, bargain bolthole or posh *palazzo*? Whatever you want from La



The celeb-y one Palazzina

Standard doubles are a decent size and start at £306, B&B; Grand Canal Suites go for £1,065 in low season (00 39 041528 4644, designhotels.com).

Next to the Palazzo Grassi gallery



The suave, discreet atmosphere draws in well-to-do creatives and entrepreneurs. **Madonna, George Clooney and Johnny Depp** have all checked in.

All white on the night: pale colours and mirrors in bright bedrooms are in (Philippe Starck contrast with the lush colours and fabrics in the bar and restaurant.

At PG's, pasta and risotto dishes are given the 'with-a-twist' treatment; eat at low-slung tables or **watch fancy plating in action** from the show kitchen counter.

The cool-as-a-cucumber **design is shot through with a great sense of fun.** Fornasetti face-print chairs, OTT animal hides and Chihuly-ish glass sculptures.

If you're bringing the family, book elsewhere. You can request cots for any room but really **this is one for the grown-ups.**

Not hidden away enough? In summer, **withdraw to the guests-only Krug Terrace;** in winter, to the clubby Krug Lounge.



The design one Hotel L'Orologio Venezia

Officially, doubles start at £230, B&B, but **in January you could find a room for £160** (00 39 041272 5800, hotelorologiovenezia.com).

Fantastic. Right beside the Rialto market, facing the ornate Ca d'Oro gallery and **handy for the £1.75 *traghetto* over the Grand Canal** to Cannaregio.

Retro leather chairs, trendy poured-resin floors and its watch theme (the owner's a collector) give the hotel **a stylish, masculine feel** — not one for fans of florals.



High-spec rooms, named after watch designs, have red-marble bathrooms (**taps are shaped like watch-winders**) and replica-Rolux clocks.

Breakfast is a well-stocked buffet feast

The small bar (and its brilliantly gossipy barman) is a fab stop en route to dinner. Order a spritz with local Select, not Aperol.

To overlook the water, **you'll need to upgrade two categories** to a Deluxe Double with Grand Canal View, from £310.

Not many Grand Canal hotels have a quayside of their own — on sunny days, bag a table here for alfresco breakfast.



The blow-out one Aman Venice

Dip into the kids' university fund for this one: entry-level rooms start at £932, B&B. The 18th-century-frescoed Tiepolo Suite — from £3,812 — isn't even the priciest on offer (00 39 041270 7333, aman.com).

The Aman is on the San Polo side of the Grand Canal, **round the corner from ancient *bacari*** (wine bars) selling cheap *cicchetti* (bar snacks) and Prosecco.

You're living the *palazzo* dream here, immersed in swathes of gold leaf, ornate stucco and cherub-adorned fireplaces.

A real Count lives on the top floor.

The 24 bedrooms are in line with Aman's calm, minimal aesthetic; **bathrooms are epic and brimming with amenities.** Feel free to forget your toothbrush *and* your toothpaste.



You get brilliant, twinkly canal views from the first-floor restaurant, over elegant Italian dinner dishes; try **sea bass with turnip tops and burrata.**

The only hotel garden by the Grand Canal

First-world problems here: if you're leaving the hotel on foot, **prepare to trip over tour guides** pointing out where George Clooney married Amal.

The hotel's **gorgeously polished private boat** is a super-swish way to make your exit for the airport, but it's £267 — so walk 10 minutes to a *vaporetto* stop and pay £13.

PRICE

LOCATION

THE VIBE

ROOMS

FOOD & DRINK

BEST THING

WORST THING

TRAVEL'S TIP

Serenissima, **Liz Edwards** knows a hotel that'll float your boat



The peaceful one
LaGare Hotel Venezia

Doubles start at £100, B&B; you can get a **junior suite (with canal views) from £268** — not bad for Venice (00 39 041736250, lagarehotelvenezia.com).

Out amid the glassmakers on sleepy Murano island, the hotel is a boat ride from the centre (40 minutes to San Marco, or 20 to Fondamente Nove in Cannaregio).

It's part of the MGallery by Sofitel collection of historic hotels. This one, a spacious modern number in a former glass factory, pulls in laid-back Euro-weekenders.

King-size beds, soothing neutrals, and velvets and brocades make the 119 bedrooms deliciously restful; **sparkly Venini glassware** in public spaces provides pep.



It's all **elegant linen and regional dishes** in the Rivalonga restaurant; snacks and cocktails on LaGare Café's waterside terrace.

The **free boat transfer service** to and from Venice airport — request the transfer in advance via the hotel website.

The £9 fee to enter the spa

Save this one for your **second or third visit** to Venice — if you're ticking off must-sees around San Marco, you'll want to stay somewhere more central.



The bargain one
Hotel Do Pozzi

It's amazing to find doubles from £74, B&B, anywhere in Venice; even more **amazing to find them so close to the centre** (00 39 0415207855, hoteldopozzi.it).



You're all of **three minutes' walk from St Mark's Square**, tucked down an alley next to the Burberry store.

City-breakers of all ages, and all nationalities

Rooms are **not much to look at, but they're clean and comfy**, so you won't care.

Considering the rate, breakfast is a decent spread of fruit, bread, cereals, cheeses, meats and cakes (**perfect for a tight-budget picnic lunch...**).

Alfresco breakfasts in the plant-potted courtyard feel extra special so close to, but hidden from, the bustle of the main drag.

Bathrooms, while bigger than you might expect, come with **hairdryers attached to the wall**. Grrr!

Ask for a room on the third floor for **newer decor and higher ceilings** — and baths in room Nos. 47 and 48.

Or try...

£83 Antiche Figure

Because: This friendly place, in a Grand Canal-side 15th-century palazzo, is handy for the station as well as bars and restaurants beloved of locals. Doubles from £83, B&B (00 39 0412759486, hotelantichefigure.it).

£182 Charming House DD724

Because: A cool boutique joint, it comes with art-filled walls, and the Peggy Guggenheim Collection as a neighbour. Doubles from £182, B&B (00 39 0412770262, thecharminghouse.com).

£151 Palazzo Abadessa

Because: An antiques-filled hotel in less-explored Cannaregio, Abadessa feels grand but not OTT, and has a fab walled garden. Doubles from £151, B&B (00 39 0412413784, abadessa.com).

£644 Belmond Hotel Cipriani

Because: The home of the Bellini is a Venice icon, and has an Olympic-sized pool; worth the five-minute boat ride from San Marco. Open Mar-Nov. Doubles from £644, B&B (00 39 0415207744, belmond.com).

Get me there

BA (ba.com) flies from Heathrow and Gatwick, from £35 one way. **EasyJet** (easyjet.com) flies from six UK airports, from £22 one way. **Citalia** (01293 831970, citalia.com) has a four-night break at Hotel Do Pozzi from £463pp, B&B, including Luton flights.

