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# Secret Venice



## Synopsis

Winner of the 2011 Independent Publisher Book Awards Gold Medal in the Travel Guidebooks category! Discover the secrets of St. Mark's Basilica with not a tourist in sight, finally crack the mystery of the pillars around the Doge's Palace, take a trip on the only underground canal in Venice in search of the alchemical sculpture of the winged horse, lunch at a restaurant tucked away in a lagoon fisherman's house, track down Teriaca, that miracle potion brewed in Venice from time immemorial, decode the paintings of the Scuola di San Rocco applying the principles of the Jewish Kabbalah and see how Kabbalistic music influenced the construction of San Francesco della Vigna, visit an unknown underground cemetery, stroll through unsuspected gardens beyond the gates of palazzos and monasteries, admire the extraordinary forgotten library of the Venice Seminary, sleep in a sublime bedroom concealed within a palazzo, go shopping in Giudecca women's prison market, play petanque in the heart of the city, retreat to a wonderful lakeside monastery, away from the crowds; Five years of research have gone into the compilation of this exceptional guide, an opportunity for all who love Venice, as well as Venetians themselves, to leave the beaten track far behind and rediscover the most extraordinary city in the world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Much of what appears in this nifty book is not exactly hidden - a lot of it is in plain sight - IF you know where to look, OR what it is you are looking at! Perhaps not as useful to the tourist with one

day in Venice before/after a cruise, but for those with a few days, a treasure map. (Of course, you need a good city map as well - Venice's curling little streets and alleys can have you lost in a heartbeat - but what a great place in which to be 'lost'!) Any road, this is an interpretive locating tool for the tourist who wants something extra to go with the golden interior of St. Mark's and the treasures of the Accademia.

A wonderful guide to the most hidden secrets of the city of Venice with detailed information and historical facts. A great book to have with you while wandering around Venice knowing things the majority of even Venicians don't know of or have heard of.

Highly detailed and chock-full of history and info. Much more info than I anticipated - read it before you go!

When you pack for that next Venice adventure this is a guide that you **MUST** have. Be prepared to sleuth round the laneways and canals looking for historical treasures.

While most Venice guidebooks will help you choose a hotel and find a meal, once you've arrived you don't need that information. Instead, you need "Secret Venice," a revealing, insiders guide to the secrets of the city. Explore it on your own and see why people so love Venice, for the surprises off the tourist track, the secrets of the real city and its many charms. Covering San Marco, Santa Croce, San Polo, and Castello among other areas, and a guide around the lagoon, "Secret Venice" includes full-color street level maps for each area, so you can find your way to The Eyes of St. Lucy, and to the Arzana collection of preserved boats, including an authentic gondolin da fresco located in a 15th century boatyard. On your own, you may spend a morning photographing the colors of Burano, but with "Secret Venice," you will also understand the reason for the vibrantly painted houses. During the Middle Ages, white quicklime disinfected the houses where residents were stricken with the plague. Bright rainbow colored houses designated those which were spared from the disease. On days when the lagoon was covered in fog, the bright colors also helped fishermen find their way home. Fabulous! Helen Gallagher

This book invites you to join an elite, which is above, beyond and beside the crowds that follow the trodden path from one well-advertised landmark to another. The choice of this book implies that you look deeper, go further, need more. It's a flattering presumption but it seems I'll have to forgo my

membership. Yes, the course of avoiding the obvious sights takes you to the places more obscure and minor. That's to be expected. The question is how obscure and how minor. Here is the plaque with a relief of a shoe. "German shoemakers lived there in 14 century". Oh? They did? Well...What's next? Next can be a delight like the only clay tennis court in Venice. Unmissable. Or a couple scraggy shrubs that can be accessed if you get to the farthest west of Canareggio in the time from 09 00 am and 10 20 am and find a man named Vitale who will let you in and wait till you get an eyeful of two scraggy shrubs. Of course there are some true gems (like the Marcantonio Bragadin's memorial in San Zanipolo) but I think these can be found also in a more conventional guidebooks and they constitute about one tenth of the Secret Venice's offerings. And I would have been more happy with the authors' noble abstainment from the obviously interesting sights if they didn't undertake some rather pathetic attempts to make these minor offerings look more intriguing and sometimes esoteric. They write that a figure of the knight representing Pride among seven deadly sins in a column of the Doges' Palace wears a Satanic horned helmet. Well, the elaborate headgear was worn into and outside of a battle by a more vain knights. Yes, such decorations signal vanity and pride but they are not Satanic any more than some golden trinket is. I've enjoyed some of the text printed on the background in the color of a yesterday's carrot purple, some of the information was interesting and helpful but when the authors dove into Kabbalah and deservedly forgotten symbolism my eyes glazed over. I'm a historian by education - and I was bored, I don't know how laymen react. Maybe some guy will be happy to possess the knowledge of similarity in the names Mark and makara ("Sanskrit's for crocodile") and say - Ah, hence the crocodile at the top of that other column! - Well, the authors are feeding their "elite" a hodge-podge of pseudo-insights. Mark derives from the Latin word designating the connection to Mars, the god of war in Roman pantheon. In Hindu mythology makara carries the god Varuna and the goddess Ganga, it can look as a mix of dolphin, elephant, fish and yes - crocodile. But it's not "a Sanskrit word for crocodile". There is a name Makar, it's Greek and means blessed. So Mark The Crocodile is just a funky fusion concocted by the book's authors. On the same page there is a claim that Veneti "came from the south of Russia, from Paphlagonia" - but Paphlagonia is in Asia Minor, that's a different region. But all this at least echoes some half-facts and pseudo-similarities. When the book tells of gandoliers' symbolism pure fantasy reigns. The vague visual resemblance between a pole-thrusting boatman and a Christian dragon slayer St. George is enough to include a piece about the gandoliers' sacral daily poking of a monster that clings to the bottom of the canals and lagoon - thus the evil thing is prevented from surfacing. There are some instances of even purer verbal flatulence - like the information that a condemned man standing between two columns at the

Piazzetta could see from the clock at the clock tower opposite the exact time of his demise. Guys...are you serious? Or you are just mocking us, walkers of the less trodden roads? I've decided not to take this book on my next trip to Venice. I don't need it to lead me to some hole in the pavement and tell that in this very place a cobbler's cart overturned in 17th century and the three shoes that fell out represent the Trinity but are one shoe short of Four, four shoes would have resembled The Sacred Number in the Masonic Rite of the Scottish order.

Of course it may be simply that it speaks so eloquently to so many of my own interests, about which most guidebook maintain perfect silence; but I really do think this is the most wonderful guide that I've yet come across to any city. The authors have an extraordinary capacity to put great erudition into savoring the charms and fascinations of discovery, a combination uniquely - and in their hands, painlessly - well suited to the mysteriousness of Venice in particular.

We had high hopes for this book, but after spending time and effort searching for the secret Cantine Mensa in Giudecca (not even the locals had heard of it) and the shop in the chapel of Santa Reparata (again, lots of wasted time) I have to say we could not rely on this book. It looks good though!

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