

Absolutely

Travel

> SPOTLIGHT ON VENICE FILM FESTIVAL *p. 50*



LA DOLCE VITA

Beguiling at any time of year, Venice is injected with an added touch of glamour during its annual film festival. An irresistible collision of old-school Hollywood and history-seeped architecture, the festival provides the perfect opportunity for seeing iconic Venice through the eye of a lens.

From 27th August – 6th September;
labiennale.org



spotlight on

VENICE

Film FESTIVAL

Words **EMMA J PAGE**

GET A TASTE

► The Palazzo del Cinema on the Lido esplanade hosts several screenings and a limited number of tickets are available to the public the day before – head to the office of La Biennale, the festival organizers, to secure some hot seats (labiennale.org). Don't worry if you miss out on tickets – the city itself is the star of the show, a living film set for more than 2000 films. Get a sense of its cinematic history by booking a tailor-made tour courtesy of Belmond Hotel Cipriani. Escorted by a private guide, a gondola ride transports you to St Mark's Square where scenes from Orson Welles' *Othello* were filmed, before moving on to Caffè Florian, the historic coffee bar setting of Anthony



Miguella's *The Talented Mr Ripley*. Other stops include the church of San Nicolo dei Mendicoli, featured in cult film *Don't Look Now*, plus the Academia Bridge and 15th century Palazzo Contarini, part of the iconic backdrop to *The Merchant of Venice*.

WHAT TO SEE

► The list of attractions is endless, from the awe-inspiring Doge's Palace and St Mark's Basilica to the sumptuous art of the Gallerie dell'Accademia and the Modernist treasures at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection. It can feel overwhelming; every palazzo, bridge and narrow street of Venice's six districts has a rich history. But this is a walkable city, studded with pretty waterways, and it's easy to head off the beaten track in search of less obvious treasures. Stop at the Rialto Market early on a Saturday morning to watch the locals barter over the catch of the day before exploring the quieter streets of surrounding Castello, housing the ancient Basilica di San Giovanni.

WHERE TO EAT

► For classic Venetian cooking, head to one of the simple trattorias and traditional *bacari* (bars) where you'll find the locals grazing from a selection of informal canapés, or *chicetti*. Book a courtyard table at Al Giardinetto da Severino (algiardinetto.it) for inventive fish dishes, while the home-cooked pasta at Da Gianni (00 39 041 52 37 210) is favoured by locals. For a shot of glamour, a Bellini at iconic Harry's Bar (harrysbarvenezia.com) shouldn't be missed, while San Marco's Da Ivo (ristorantedaivo.it) offers seductive fine dining.

WHERE TO SHOP

► You'll find traditional Italian perfumes and home fragrances, including elegant scents by Dr Gritti and Dr Vranjes, stocked at Arco del Paradiso (00 39 041 241 3745). Quaint bookshop Libreria Acqua Alta (00 39 041 296 0841) features vintage biographies and history books artfully



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stacked in gondolas and bathtubs. And in San Polo, Viziovirtù Cioccolateria, (viziovirtu.com) is a stylish chocolate and cake shop offering sweet treats created from ancient Venetian recipes. For traditional Venetian glass, head to the nearby island of Murano by vaporetto.



WHERE TO STAY

► Nestled on Guidecca Island with sweeping views across the lagoon towards the Doge's Palace, the Belmond Hotel Cipriani (belmond.com) has been a byword for glamour since the 1950s. Home to George Clooney when he's in town for the festival, this is a luxurious but discreet escape, offering respite from the bustle of the city. Ask head barman Walter Bolzonella to serve up Nina's Special, co-created by George and named in honour of his mother, before retiring to one of the generous-sized bedrooms, featuring Rubelli fabrics and classic marble

bathrooms. In the thick of the action, close to St Mark's Square, The Bauer Palazzo (ilpalazzovenezia.com) offers Venetian luxury overlooking the Gran Canal, while Hotel Luna Baglioni's original frescos and antique furniture guarantee wow factor (baglionihotels.com).

THE DAMAGE

► *The Leading Hotels of the World* offers stays at Belmond Hotel Cipriani from £495 per night, inc. breakfast; lhw.com. Film tours cost £92 per hour. EasyJet flies to Venice Marco Polo from London Gatwick airport from £19.74 one-way from April - October; easyjet.com