

# Why Venice's Hotels Have a Sinking Feeling

One of the most unique European cities is, without a doubt, Venice. No place on Earth is quite like this well preserved city, whose canals, gondolas and gondoliers have earned it a permanent place in the hearts of romantics everywhere. Like many magical places, there is a drawback to Venice's special charm: it is sinking. The water and canal ways that make Venice so unique may eventually lead to its downfall – but it's hardly a recent phenomenon. Venice hotels and other buildings have been grappling with this issue for centuries. Why is Venice flooding? What can be done about?



## A City Borne of Necessity

When Venice was first settled, people didn't choose the location due to its perceived romantic or scenic qualities; no one envisioned the canals and fame that would come later. Instead, an invasion by Attila the Hun in 452 propelled many Italians to the coastal regions; a group of small islands within a lagoon is where Venice eventually ended up developing. From the beginning, then, Venice was waterlogged. Its founders fought against the marshland upon which they built the new city, using canals to get around the obvious problem of having little solid ground to work with in the area.

## Flooding Plagues Venice

Venice has always struggled with flooding. Hotels in Venice, like many other places here, routinely have to set up wooden walkways on the outside so people can gain entry during excessive flooding. Floods are most common during the high tide seasons of autumn and spring. In addition to devising clever ways to keep these flood waters from infiltrating Venice hotels, the citizens of Venice have to contend with a problem that renders the gorgeous Piazza San Marco completely submerged in water at least once a year. Tourists who come here with hopes of experiencing this stunning part of the city are crestfallen to learn that the piazza is completely inaccessible at such times.



## Is the Problem Getting Worse?

Throughout most of its history, Venice has been sinking at a rate of approximately 7 cm per year. When it was discovered that artesian wells might be to blame, they were banned in the 1960s. However, buildings, streets and hotels in Venice continued to experience noticeable sinking. In fact, it's been calculated that the city sank an incredible 24 cm in a single year recently. Global warming is being blamed for this increase, and the management of many Venice hotels and other establishments are getting behind different ideas to curb the problem. Some believe steel gates might work, and inflatable pontoons are being developed to block the major lagoon entrances during high tides. With any luck, these efforts will save this magical city from disappearing forever.



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