

VENICE AIMS TO CLEAN ITSELF UP



When any European city boasts numbers of visitors such as 20 million per year, then it seems that the city is in financial dreamland. However, the problem for Venice is that most of its visitors are not the high-spending, coffee-sipping members of society's richer hierarchies, yet they tend to be day-trippers with bare chests and intentions to pass through one of Europe's most unique cities in a state far from sober. They have an annoying tendency to wreak havoc on Venice's infrastructure without leaving anything resembling a decent financial footprint. The result of such guests, treating the canals as beaches, littering St. Mark's square and littering, is that Venetians have decided to force them to treat Venice in a manner related to its stature.

The first step to improving the situation was seen as trying to kill two birds with one stone. By asking Rome to introduce a lodging tax on short-term visitors, it was believed that the class of visitor would rise and Venice would similarly benefit financially. This did not turn out as planned. Now, huge fines are the threat to those littering on St. Mark's square, walking around bare-chested or dangling their feet in the canals. There has even been a ban imposed on the sale of fast food, thus eliminating the threat of empty pizza boxes culminating in places they do not belong. Fines as high as €500 have been threatened to those not treating Venice with the respect it deserves.

Venetians have even blamed themselves for the current unpleasant situation. It is commonly believed that, whereas fellow Europeans are harsh on tourists littering their streets, the Venetians are still far too lenient, thinking that each foreigner is bringing bags of cash to the city. This is, of course, not the case.

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