

SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN FOR VENICE LAUNCHED AFTER DISASTROUS FLOODS



In mid-November, the world-famous Italian lagoon city of Venice, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in its entirety, was hit by particularly severe flooding. This resulted not only in enormous damage to the infrastructure, but also in deaths.

The country even declared a state of emergency in Venice after the city was engulfed by 1.87m high water levels. The floods cut power to local households and damaged many historic buildings. **More than 80% of Venice was flooded including the St Mark's Square which was one of the worst hit areas.** Now, the Italian government tries to quickly provide funds to restore the city.

The Italian tourism promotion agencies ENIT (Ente Nazionale Italiana del Turismo) have launched a campaign to support the city. All 28 branches worldwide have stepped up their activities in favor of Venice. This also includes the active promotion of the solidarity campaign "Venezia nel cuore" ("Venice in the Heart") launched by the local authorities. A bank account has been established through which donations for the reconstruction and maintenance of Venice can be made.

The famous St Mark's Basilica in Venice had suffered considerable damage. Its crypt was completely flooded and there are fears that the columns may have been structurally damaged. Any restoration would cost hundreds of millions of euros, according to local authorities.

Tourism in Venice is important for the Italian tourism economy. In recent years, demand for travel in Venice has grown strongly from both the international and Italian markets - so much so that Venice has even become a flagship for overtourism.

Between January and July 2019, visitor numbers in Venice rose again by 6.5 per cent compared to the previous year; from the international source market alone by as much as 13.5 per cent. **Local income from tourism increased by 5.8 percent over the same period.**

The Director General of ENIT, Giorgio Palmucci, repeatedly proclaimed that it is safe to visit Venice and that all the places of interest are now accessible again.

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