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CowfeathersFarm

To the world it is a very small farm.

Monday, January 15, 2018

Venice? Worth the trip and expense?

So, our family has once again been tumbling about in the electric dryer of schedules. The cycle is over and now find myself at that treasured time of year where we slow down, and "life" gets cancelled for snow and ice and true *life* can blossom in the snow.

Today, simple goals of a clean kitchen, a cake cooling on the racks, sitting next to the fire and reading The Biggle Horse Book, A Concise and Practical Treatise on the Horse, Adapted to the Needs of Farmers and Others Who have a Kindly Regard for This Noble Servitor of Man. The title is a bit wordy, but I do love the advice thus far, penned in 1894. And still quite relevant.

"The three greatest enemies of the horse are idleness, fat and a dumb blacksmith." Harriet Biggle.

"If you must put frosty bits in some mouths, let it be your own. Suffering begets sympathy." John Tucker

Huz is unfortunately off getting a new tire on his 16 year old car- he's going for 400k miles- and it has begun snowing in earnest, so a new tire may help him return. He and Youngest switched his flat on Thursday evening in the rainy dark- but it was a warm(ish) night. Winter swiftly returned to the roost. I will be glad to have him back home, but may end up fetching him with the 4x4 truck.

And with this snow, I have had more time to think about our wonderful trips of 2017. Recently, a friend asked me if I'd ever been to Venice, and I realized that a trip down memory lane would be great fun on this blog, and maybe it would help her plan her own impending visit to Venice!

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C. Drost



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Let me start by sharing that I was not the most enthusiastic visitor to Venice. I feel that now sounds petulant, but I am not fond of crowds, and my understanding was that Venice is small town with a huge tourist population- in other words, "a crush". But, as Huz and I were going to be so close by in Verona, it seemed like an opportunity of a lifetime to see such a famous city. In fact, I was the one who said "Let's just go."

We made a hotel reservation when my checking around indicated there were fewer options left every day, and so we picked in a "dart-at-board" fashion.

Other than purchasing my guide books- Rick Steves [Italy](#) and the [Venice Pocket Guide](#) by the same author, I did very little learning about our destination.

That was a mistake. Although Huz and I are easy travelers, great walkers and fine about "winging it", I should have made a greater effort at understanding Venice, because boy, did I have questions once I got there! The city is fascinating, and mysterious, and I wanted to know so much more than what my guidebooks could answer. Since returning home I have added one more book to my Venice list, one that I should have read before going. It is called [Venice, A New History](#) by Thomas F. Madden. Now, I wish I could return to do it all again, knowing a LOT more.

The first thing I should have made an effort to understand was the Vaporetto system. We arrived at the train station at one end of the Grand Canal, and could find no information booth or help, so asked a portabagagli- or luggage porter, how far it was to our hotel. He said 20 minutes, and we declined his help and began walking.



What we did not know, and should have, was that there was a Vaporetto station at the train station that would have taken us right to the front of our hotel! A Vaporetto is a boat that is the "bus" of Venice. It goes up and down the Grand Canal, stopping along the way. The 20 minutes was optimistic, and we only had an address in a notoriously confusing city, but without much trouble, we found our way.

Our dumb luck, we had booked a gorgeous room in an amazing location, right on the Grand Canal. Venice is split, in a "S" shaped ribbon by the Grand Canal, and the town focuses largely on this watery thoroughfare.

Hotel Pesaro Palace is located in a palazzo, or what was once a very grand house for a wealthy Venice merchant.



Huz, in the mirror, making sure he has wifi, no doubt.



Our room overlooked the palazzo courtyard and the Ca d'Oro, or House of Gold, one of the ornate ancient palazzos in Venice. It is now a museum.
If you looked to the right from our room the Grand Canal was a buzz.
Across the Grand Canal was the Fish Market.



In the market, on market day, you can buy fish!



Produce!

Boy, do I want to fill a bag with the stuff in this photo.



The posted limits for the quality of the fish being offered:



Advice: find tucked away small cafes and every late afternoon/evening have an Aperol Spritz. It is a thing for a reason. Dinner can come later, much later, if you like!







In our wanders we found these dapper red striped fellows climbing aboard their boat. It turned out that afternoon was a full on Venice style Parade and Regatta!



The famed Rialto Bridge, normally teeming with people was closed for the event.



We found a spot to watch (and yes, it was a crush!)



We do a lot of parades in Ohio. After 18 years here I know a parade when I see one. This was a Parade. On boats. I'm thinking this is where the tradition of Parades got started, as it makes sense why they are called "floats" now. This float combined the musicianship of the Adelphi Band with the royal personages of the Pumpkin Show Queen and court.

Yes, I am comparing Venice to Circleville, Ohio's Pumpkin Show Parade.



They even had horses!



After the royal floats all passed, dozens of teams competing in the races rowed past to great acclaim. They even had a Team USA! The photo above shows our hotel, on the left, and the hotel next to it with the art sculpture "Support" by Lorenzo Quinn, symbolizing hands holding the building from falling into the water.



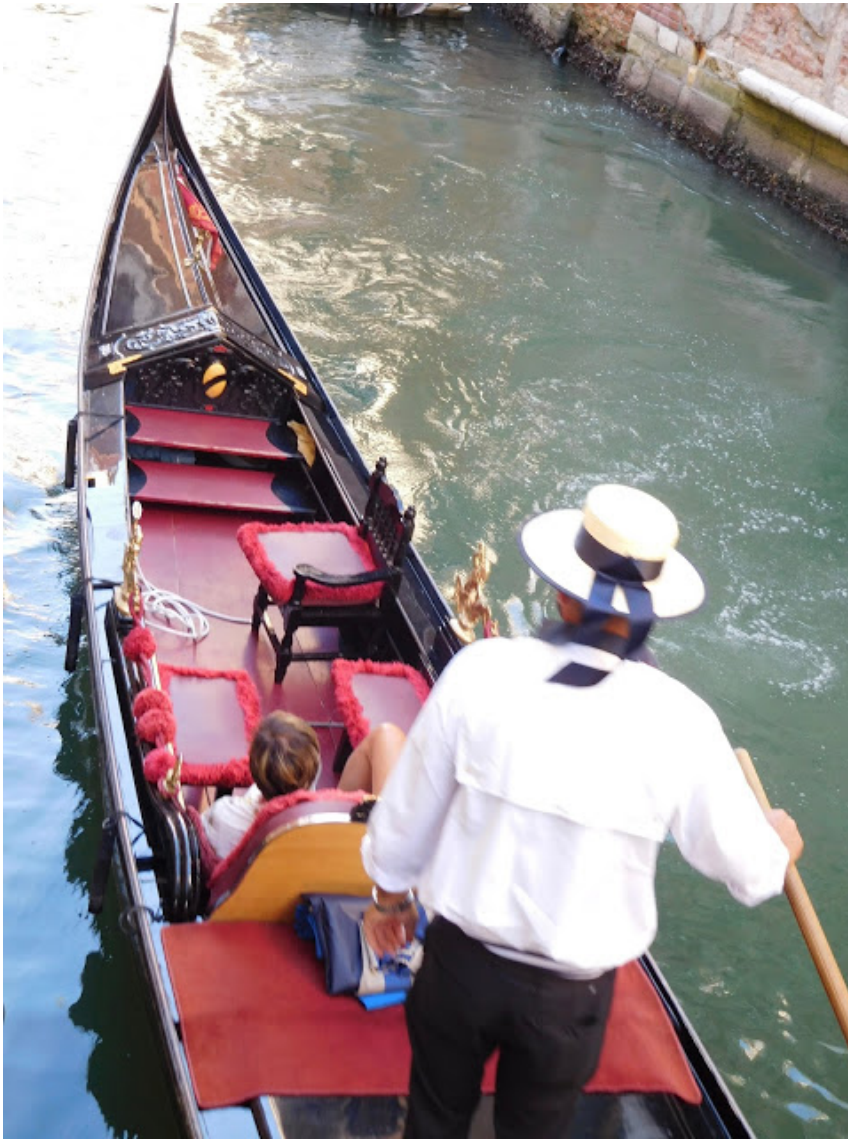
Venice is for walkers. As in people who walk, not devices meant to help with such. There are thousands of little bridges, and you want to peer at the crumbling majesty visible on every one. The rabbit-warren of little alleys that is the main way of getting around can make you feel dizzy. A good sense of direction will help. A compass may help if you don't have one of those, and always give yourself leeway to not be where you thought you'd be. Pay attention, lest you end in a canal.



Those "oops" moments are always a bit of a fun surprise.



Keep an eye out for the Gondolas when you are on a bigger bridge, you can peer over the edge and watch this tourist moment!



Advice: Go ahead and see the freakishly ornate St. Mark's Cathedral, and the Doge's Palace, take a Gondola ride, etc. But, take time to notice all the amazing little bits of Venice; the tape holding it together, the laundry hanging out the windows, the garbage boat and the windowsill herb gardens.



Advice: Go to Saint Marks Square, or Piazza San Marco, in the morning and late afternoon. In the midday it is full of tourists off the cruise boats, and you will, again, be in the crush. This is the glorious building lit up by the late afternoon sun.



We enjoyed a tour of St. Marks and a climb to the top in the morning, with fewer crowds. The horses atop the cathedral are replicas of the originals, but the originals, stolen from Constantinople by Doge Enrico Dandolo on a Crusade, are still housed in the top of the cathedral.



Advice: Grab a ride from one end of Venice to the other on a Vaporetto. It is an inexpensive way to tour the Grand Canal. We chose late afternoon when the crowd traffic was lighter. The homes on the Grand Canal were the show pieces of the wealthiest families of Venice. They are falling to bits in a lot of places now, but keep your eyes peeled and you can still see how ornate they once were.

This is a mosaic on the front of a palazzo, along with trompe l'oeil painting. I don't know where the rest of the person went that should be attached to that arm, but I think it was Jesus, (the Venetians of

old were devoted Catholics- I'm sure many still are) and these are artisans, paint or sculpture, discussing the art. I particularly like the "one red leg one brown leg" tights.



Advice: in the afternoon, head out away from Rialto in any direction until you get away from the tourist areas. The Campos (paved "field" near each church) will be filled with kids playing "football". Some of the Campos will have a small cafe where you can sit in the campo and enjoy an Aperol Spritz!



Advice: Restaurants. We found a few misses, but our big hits were dinner at Vecia Cavana, where the food was wonderful, tons of local families and regulars and a wait staff that was happy to make us feel at home. Of course, if you don't live in O"hi"O, you may not be quite as comfortable!





Our other favorite was lunch at Pizzeria Oke. It is right on the water, and extra props for serving a vegetarian, gluten-free pizza that was as good as it looks. Watering Mouth Now. And, don't forget the gelato. Our favorites were from the non-chain places, and it sounds ridiculous to say, as it seems to be the same advice everyone gives. I don't really like ice cream very much. But, after a day of tromping around the city, exploring, getting lost to find yourself something great, some evenings all I really wanted was a gelato and some sleep! It really is that good.

Final Bit of Advice: if you have a chance to see Venice, go.

Posted by C. Drost at [4:34 PM](#)

2 comments:



Tuesday, October 10, 2017

Sill Skill- repairing old wood and the want of Skilled Workers

"It is hard to find skilled help, plumbing, electric, painters, all that! I can't get anyone to come out here." I spoke with Mom on the phone yesterday. My parents live on a lovely home on the water, but it is pretty distant from any large metro area, and not in the "country" - of middle America, where we have active Vo-Tech programs.

She also pointed out that Houston, Florida, northern Cali, large areas devastated by recent natural disasters are going to be rebuilding- and do those areas have the labor force skilled in the tasks needed for so much at once?

We live in rural Ohio- not the most rural, still... In my Connecticut high school, we had student council, soccer and orchestra. Here? FFA, football and Marching Band. (There certainly is a student council...pretty sure...but I don't think an orchestra?) And out of high school in CT, you went to College. Or University. But in our area, although those are still options, and many do go on to college or uni, a large chunk of high schoolers leave the high school every day for Vocational Technical College. There they learn skills like the ones my Mom needs to hire. I think that makes us lucky. I can find a plumber, or an electrician, or a car mechanic. And the country life means many kids are farm kids that know how to operate large machinery and fix diesel engines, let alone jump start a car or change a tire. (Even in Connecticut, my Dad made sure his daughters also had those last two skills.)

Some things are still hard to find here, though. It was challenging to find someone to fix a wonky beam in my 200 year old barn last year but, done.

Also have yet to find a skilled painter/restorer for the soffiting and trim on our 200 year old house. I'm afraid it will be me in a cherry picker.

I did find a nice fix for the aged sills. Thanks to advice from Tom K. who, with his wife Leslie, took on the project of restoring this once abandoned farmstead (see The Big Daddy of Before and Afters from May 2017) and pointed me in the direction of a newer wood repair product, Abatron.

Every few years, I have had to re-do the sills by peeling off the already peeling paint, filling the sills with wood filler and repainting. It just doesn't last. I have great hope for this product giving me a reprieve from the repeated repairs!



This is what the sill looked like after removing the peeling paint. The shape is meant to be a bullnose, but so much wood is deteriorated, there isn't much original shape left.



A close-up of the most damaged portion.



This section is in the best shape. You can see bits of the wood filler left in some of the horizontal

cracks.

The Abatron Liquid Wood gets poured and brushed into the exposed, damaged wood. Then you mix together the Wood Epox and make a new sill where the old wood has disappeared. I just kept piling more Wood Epox on and smoothing it out. I found it really important to have good gloves- like nitrile or latex, and a little water to help smooth it out.

Below is how it looked before it dried. After it was dry, I then could sand it down to be nice and smooth.



I was not pleased with the dip at the bottom, but I ran out of Wood Epox! Having never before used the product, I had a lot of Liquid Wood left over and used all of the epoxy. I can't find it locally, and order it from Amazon, so I couldn't quickly remedy the situation. (We do not have 2 hour Amazon here!)



This is how the sill looked after it was dried and sanded.



And finished with a new coat of paint. That is the worst of the sills. Only more minor repairs to do in about 13 more. So this window has a repaired and repainted sill, plus both shutters. And, still, I need to work on the top of the window!
Maybe I could petition they begin to teach "Sill Repair and Painting of Old Houses" at the Vo-Tech?

Posted by [C. Drost](#) at [9:14 AM](#)

No comments:



Saturday, September 23, 2017

Vicenza, Italy. A Day Trip.

Ciao. It is a lovely, warm day in central Ohio, and a perfect opportunity to share memories of a beautiful day in northern Italy!

As I've mentioned, when we are on these conference-centric trips, Huz heads off in the early hours to his lectures and lunches, and I head off to adventures.

Works for me! I have managed to find great travel companions at times, and this day was rich with good company.



Steve and Matt, with whom I had walked the Verona bastions, and explored the Arsenal and Castelvechio joined me again, and we were lucky enough to add a fourth in Shane.

The crew looked to the cruise director and asked the plan. I didn't have one.

But, I do like to get off the beaten track. I truly enjoy the big cities and famous places, but when I look back on these trips, often my favorite memories involve finding the smaller places, the quieter hamlets and discovering what they have to offer.

So, a few words with the hotel reception desk, and we headed off to Porta Nuova Stazione and platform 3 to await the train to Vicenza. At the hotel, I had googled "Vicenza" and up popped some of the sights to be found in this small town between Verona and Venice.

Aqueduct. Roman. Sold. I have never seen one, and I recall being fascinated by the idea of the Roman Aqueduct in middle school. I think I even made a model of an aqueduct in a single grade. 6th? Plus, hours spent playing with water and gravity in the Little River next to Puckihuddle- my childhood home, had me motivated to see the real deal. The location was Fogazarro... which may have been a bit vague for most adventurers, but we had time, and my companions were an engineer, a roofing and guttering specialist and a general

contractor/pilot. So, my sell didn't have to be hard. Basically, I said "Vicenza has an aqueduct."

We arrived in Vicenza and headed in the direction that seemed to lead to town.



On the way we found a helpful map. It did not list our quarry-the aqueduct, but we found a Corso Fogazarro, and headed north as indicated. To the east was the obvious entrance, through a formidable wall and tower into the town, but we headed through these lovely gates instead to a green space.



This lovely building over water, so quiet and peaceful was in a garden, the Park Giardino Salvi.



Quite fine. But, it is not an aqueduct.

We headed out of the park and into town north of the gardens. Finding Fogazzaro. We headed out in search of Roman delights.

In front of the Parrochia di Santa Croce ai Carmini was an assembly of well dressed people. It appeared as if we had happened upon a wedding! So, we searched the crowd for the bride and groom, and couldn't definitively identify a groom- there were several possible candidates, but no apparent bride. Until a flash of white down the street caught my attention and I pointed it out to my companions. A bride, facing a gent who was pulling the veil over her face. Could we have just happened upon a father about to walk his daughter to the church? The aqueduct has been here for 1000 years, and can wait!

And, here comes the bride! But, unusually, her stride is quite, long. And she is very tall. And she is wearing rather large trainers. And, as she gets near us, she has an impressive amount of facial scruff. My friends, that is a dude. Maybe we are at a gay wedding? Not expected, but still cool. As the bride was presented to the fellow we could now assume was the groom, the crowd response, and theatrical "kiss" and "dip" made it clear we were just witnessing the age old pastime of dudes everywhere. Taking the mick out of their buddy on his wedding day. Or, since this is Italy, "far ridere i polli. "



So, enough of this nonsense, we have an aqueduct to find.

We walk up to the Rio Bacchiglione, and water seems like a logical place for an aqueduct? Sure enough there is a ruin across the water. It doesn't look Roman... more medieval. Still, worth checking out. So, we find a bridge to cross and then into someone's back yard to get closer to this structure, deciding, nope. Not aqueductal.





It is a cool portion of the medieval wall, with some serious Goldilocks and the Three Bears choices for entering and leaving.

Consulting the map on cell phone says we are off track, and so make our way back to Fogazzaro. The wedding party is no longer in front of the church. And we are stumped in finding our aqueduct. Steve heads off to chat up a nun in the square to see if he can suss it out.

I head into a pharmacy to ask the old gentleman behind the counter. "Dov'è l'aqueduct romano?" I say. He replies that he's never heard of it. Hmmmm. So, I ask him "Avanti Corso Fogazzaro, c'è qualcosa di romano?"

Now, my Italian is terrible, but he is trying to understand. I ask "Parla inglese?" He does not. But he does not know "aqueduct." It is unclear to me if it is the word, as they may call them something else in Italian? Or, he knows what I mean, but has never heard of one here. He instead draws me a lovely map in shaky hand to the Piazza dei Signori. I want to stay and plague him more, as the shop is empty. But, it is about 120 degrees F in the shop, and smells strongly of camphor, and I must dash. So, I tell him, "Grazie mille!" and head back out into the street.

Steve has not gotten anywhere with the nun. I tell my companions that a local thinks there is no aqueduct here. We may be out of luck.

So, we head down the sidewalk towards down town, feeling a failure.

Until I stepped on this.



A glass window in the sidewalk on Fogazzaro. We decide that it is a tad anticlimactic, but this is our aqueduct. When you pay to see the "Two Headed Boy!" at the sideshow, and it is a kid holding a puppet.

But, undeterred, there is still much to see.

The very pretty Piazza dei Signori is a great destination, thank you Signore old pharmacist guy!



The dominant building in the Piazza is the Basilica Palladiana. In our wandering of Vicenza, we find that Palladia was an architect in the 16th century that held great fame. He designed many buildings in Vicenza, more here than in any other city. So, it is a World Heritage sight for Palladian buildings. Now, in the US, we have many buildings of the 1990s that feature Palladian windows...and as far as I know, World Heritage has yet to recognize us for this, but, whatever.

My adventuring fellows note there are people on the roof. So, we head to the Basilica to see if we can join them. Plus, there are statues on the loggia roof that are intriguing. Especially the single statue on right, just shy of the corner, that appears to be wearing verdigris copper boots. I like the look, and am curious about the fashion choice.

We pay a few euro for access to the second and third story views.



Totally worth it.

On the top story, we enter the wide marble terrace ringed by statues in various states of decay. And, I go in pursuit of my copper-booted pal, recognizing that boots would be impractical, as he's naked. And only an impractical fellow would protect his shins and let his bits lead the way.



It seems the copper was devised as a way to protect the statue from crumbling to the piazza below.

In fact, most of the statues are reinforced in some way. And looking a bit rounded and pocked.



I decided to take a panoramic photo, and my fellow travelers had a bit of fun with it. Speedy boys. (Do you see?)

We had a cappucino and un aqua frizzante at the rooftop cafe, and headed back to the piazza.



In the square below are the now familiar tall columns we had seen in Verona, with the winged lion of Venice atop one. A bit shorter was this colorful creation, that looked to be painted wood? It also looked like it may have been temporary, brought out for a festival, perhaps. But it was so pretty, especially with the blue, orange, rose and yellows surrounding it.

Our course was toward the other side of town, and the Teatro Olimpico. Not sure what it is, just that it seemed like a destination. Also, it was where the tourism office was located (as far as is possible from the train station and still be in the town- Perché?)



We found the entrance marked " Teatro Olimpico" and walked into this courtyard, sort of a Roman yard sale. All around were bits and pieces of architectural detritus, a wonder to behold. A promenade around the courtyard yielded an inestimable opportunity to become an instant goddess. I said "YES!"



Okay, maybe slightly out of proportion to my body, but hey, I'm the Goddess of...music and toilet paper?



Steve (talks to everyone) stuck his head in a window and had a grand conversation with the man inside, and I tried to figure out how to get into this Teatro...which I assume is a theater.

Finding the Tourism Office seemed the ticketto a ticket. And yes, that is correct. I also got a map of Vicenza to carry around- finally, and some words of wisdom about Andrea Palladio. Shane elected to join me in checking out the inside of the theater. Of all my traveling companions, Shane seemed to be the most concerned about my getting lost, or left behind. A fine trait in a traveling companion!

Inside it was as hushed as a church. The theater seating was rounded to the stage, great hulking wooden risers with tiny little stairs to mark the aisles. The theater is still in use, and it seems that with your ticket, you find your seat by the red cushions they place on these wooden risers, each cushion marked with a seat number. But, with no performance happening, we just found ourselves a place on a wooden seat, polished by 450 years of hineys.



The stage is elaborate, and looks like a Roman street. Three entrances to the front of the stage, one in center, one each side, are sloped and lined with buildings that get tinier as they recede. It is a beautiful piece of scenery. It is certainly possible, timing wise, that Shakespearean plays were hosted here when the theater was new.



Have a seat. The orchestra is tuning up.....

While we have been in the theater, although there is no actual orchestra, Mother Nature is tuning up outside, indeed to have a nice little thunderstorm. Our band decides to find lunch. The TO fellow recommends a vegetarian place near the main gates- on the other side of town- and we head off. Matt is likewise a vegetarian, so it isn't *just* for me. And, Steve and Shane are uncomplaining. Another fine trait in traveling companions.

A brisk walk across town shows us our next "fail" for the day. No aqueduct, and the vege place is closed.

By now, it is getting late for lunch and the rain is nearly here, so we just dash into the next open restaurant. I explain my eating limits to a doubtful waitress, and then ask for "Un piatto di formaggio?" She looks a bit more optimistic with this and takes the orders of the fellows. As we start into our bottle of wine, the rain starts coming down outside, and the open window next to me bangs shut in the wind.

I am delivered this plate of heaven.



This is how you walk 9 miles a day and gain 2 pounds.

The restaurant restroom was unisex with this little bit of stick figure humor...



As we finish our meal, the rain finishes too- very accommodating.
We head back to the train and to Verona to the next EVDI dinner adventure!



Good traveling, guys!

Posted by [C. Drost](#) at [4:07 PM](#)

No comments:



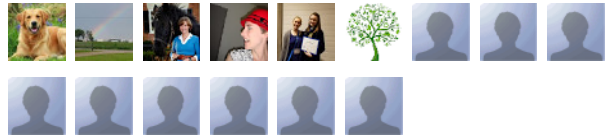
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