



## LATE DEALS

Barrhead Travel ([www.barrheadtravel.co.uk](http://www.barrheadtravel.co.uk), 0871 226 2673) has four nights in **Rome** from £327pp. Price includes B&B at a three-star hotel, a papal audience tour and return flights from Prestwick departing October 19.

Direct Holidays ([www.directholidays.co.uk](http://www.directholidays.co.uk), 0844 879 8191) has seven nights' all-inclusive accommodation in a three-star hotel in **Turkey** from £419pp. Price includes return flights from Glasgow departing October 15.

Ebookers ([www.ebookers.com](http://www.ebookers.com)) has four nights in **Helsinki** from £461pp. Price includes room-only in a four-star hotel and return flights from Glasgow departing October 10.

Cruise Thomas Cook ([www.cruisethomascook.com](http://www.cruisethomascook.com), 0800 916 6070) has 15 nights on P&O Cruises' **Caribbean Transatlantic cruise** from £1,115pp. Price includes return flights from Glasgow departing October 25.

Airtours ([www.airtours.co.uk](http://www.airtours.co.uk), 0844 871 6636) has seven nights' all-inclusive in a three-star hotel in **Majorca** from £369pp. Price includes return flights from Glasgow departing October 18.

Thomas Cook Holidays With Style ([www.thomascookstyle.com](http://www.thomascookstyle.com), 0844 412 5970) have seven nights' all-inclusive in a five-star hotel in **Mexico** from £1,009pp. Price includes return flights from Glasgow departing October 11.

last night. Someone filmed it from the bridge – she's expecting to be on YouTube soon."

The next afternoon, we head out again from the Lido, just across the water from Venice, to explore deserted islands and abandoned buildings, before crossing another shipping lane into the city. After a light dinner of seafood antipasti, we begin a night tour of the city from the Jewish ghetto, paddling along peaceful canals as darkness falls.

**The night in Venice has a different character** altogether from the day. Historian Peter Ackroyd wrote in Venice: "The night and silence of Venice are profound ... It has a quality of stillness that suits the mood of time preserved ... The doorways seem darker than in any other city, lapped as they are by the black water. The little lamps still flicker before the statues of the Virgin on the corners of the calli. There are no drunkards roaming through the street into the early-morning hours, no raucous shouts. One contemporary acoustics engineer has measured the level of nocturnal sound in Venice at 32 decibels; the night of other cities is approximately 13 decibels louder. There is no "background" noise."

Occasionally we pass a gondola carrying a couple on a romantic cruise, but mostly we're

alone. I follow the purple glowstick on the back of Rene's head as we float through empty canals. "At night, all the daily work traffic disappears," says Rene. "A lot of the private boats disappear. There are very few taxis or gondolas."

Paddling at night feels like the Venice of old that Ackroyd described. "You don't have the waves or the noise from the traffic," Rene agrees. "I find it very nice, but some people find it spooky. Some of the darker canals at the back of the city, behind St Mark's, have no illumination – light from the windows comes through the iron grills casting shadows on the walls."

We arrive again at the Grand Canal. By day, it's impressive, but by night it's something else altogether: grand, romantic and incredibly atmospheric, orange and white lights reflecting off the black water, architectural

wonders (Baroque, neo-Classical, Gothic...) to either side. We dodge the occasional vaporetto (water bus) but otherwise have it all to ourselves. It feels like we're paddling through an ancient deserted half-flooded city.

The last stragglers of the day's tourists watch us pass under the Rialto Bridge as we travel down the Grand Canal, past the City Hall. We stop to take in the famous, and unusually quiet Saint Mark's Square at night, the lights from the square shining on the water. Across the canal is the grand illuminated dome of the Madonna della Salute.

Lights start to flicker behind the red and white tower of San Giorgio Maggiore, then metallic drum-rolls of thunder sound as a storm builds and the entire sky strobos with lightning, as if the scene wasn't quite dramatic enough already. ■

### TRAVEL NOTES

#### GETTING THERE

Expedia.co.uk has return flights with British Airways from Glasgow to Venice, via London Gatwick, from £166. Visit [www.expedia.co.uk](http://www.expedia.co.uk) or call 0330 123 1235.

#### WHERE TO STAY

AD Place Venice has double rooms from £170 per night. Visit [www.adplacevenice.com](http://www.adplacevenice.com).

#### WHAT TO DO

For information on day and night

kayak tours of Venice and the surrounding islands, visit [www.venicekayak.com](http://www.venicekayak.com). Tours start from £82 per person. Kayakers should be reasonably experienced.