

# VENEZIA AD INFINITUM

## Polychronism and the Jewel of the Sea

*By Will Murray, the author of this brief biographical blur.*

Look at any map of Venice and you can practically feel it—the long, drawn-out pulse of the city is inscribed in its knotty mess of roads and rivers. The savviest traveler is liable to spend hours negotiating the twists and turns of a single block. In this town, the only thing that even hints at haste is the ponderous crawl of the Grand Canal, which yawns a sleepy “S” around the island’s sumptuous vistas—from the white marble pillars of Ca’ Rezzonico to the glimmering Gothic walls of Ca’ D’oro. The canal’s lollygag curl is daily retraced by the ships that comprise Venice’s public transit system. The fleet consists of vaporetti, which traverse the length of the canal, and traghetto, which traverse its width. Each vessel is inconspicuously marked with a number in a colored circle, reminiscent of the symbols used for NYC’s sub-

ways. But make no mistake: the Grand Canal is no Grand Central.

Consider, if you will, the rituals of the New York City subway system: well-marked trains rumble into their appointed stations; scattered passengers congregate expectantly at the platform’s edge in threes and fours and fives; train doors open; seats are selected by weighing “me first” selfishness against “after you” courtesy and “he’s nuts” avoidance; the conductor announces the next stop; the train departs. On the whole, the system works quite well. So well, in fact, that the slightest glitches cause a stir. I have seen tough-minded Brooklynites reduced to panic when the G train is temporarily displaced to the F train track. Imagine how they’d react if not only the G, but all the city’s trains, shared a single track. Better yet, imagine if none

