



BIKING IN THE GREAT DELTA From Venice to Ferrara



Laguna di Venezia

Venice, one of the greatest masterpieces that humankind has ever produced, the floating city, mysterious, steeped in history, unforgettably fascinating - along with the Venice lagoon it is the tourist destination par excellence. This journey takes Venice's public transport network as far as **Chioggia**, crosses the rivers Brenta and Adige, and unwinds southwards through the landscape created by the River Po in its slow progress towards the Adriatic, which gave life to one of the broadest wetland zones of the European Mediterranean: The Po Delta, an ideal roaming ground for the naturalist, the environmentalist and the gourmet. It arrives in **Ferrara** along the 'Destra Po' route. Two cities, both friends and enemies, joined by culture and centuries of history in which wars alternated with periods of warm friendship when the dukes of Ferrara were welcomed in San Marco in honour and brotherhood.

3 GPS + ROAD BOOK www.ferrarabike.com Technical notes

Depart: Venezia

Arrive: Ferrara, Piazza Savonarola

Length: 216,550 km (from Chioggia 196,550 km)

Difficulty level:

suitable for everyone. Level route mainly along minor roads.

Railways

Venezia/Adria • Adria/Chioggia

Bicycle transport available.

Please check timetables and availability.

Info: 892021 • www.trenitalia.com

NB. You can reach Chioggia from Venice either by direct ferry, or with the *vaporetti* via Lido di Venezia and Pellestrina.

i

APT Venezia:

Castello 5050

tel. 041 5298711

www.turismovenezia.it

APT Chioggia: Lungomare Adriatico, 101

(Sottomarina) • tel. 041 401068

www.chioggiatourism.it

Parco Regionale Veneto del Delta del Po:

tel. 0426 372202 • www.parcodeltapo.org

Parco Delta del Po Emilia-Romagna:

tel. 0533 314003 • www.parcodeltapo.it

Ferrara: Castello Estense

tel. 0532 299303 • www.ferrarainfo.com



VENICE AND ITS LAGOON

Venice is an unending source of marvels and admiration just because of the way it is: the city is supported minimally on millions of wooden posts driven into the sand, crossed by dozens of canals thronged with boats and gondolas, woven together by narrow alleys, the *calli*, which are punctuated by opening into marvellous *piazze*, the *campi*, over whose paving stones moved grand personages and the most splendid treasures of history.

Venice's lagoon stands for the dogged defence of *La Serenissima* against the sea wearing away the shoreline, and against the rivers silting up the open water. The lagoon extends from north to south in the shape of a bow, from the mouth of the Sile to the mouth of the Brenta, shielded by the islands of the Lido and Pellestrina.

The route leaves from **Venice** itself, from where we head for **Chioggia**, either by the direct Venice-Chioggia boat or the *vaporetti* (boat buses) which would allow you to stop and cycle along the Lido and Pellestrina (bikes can be carried). Chioggia, separated from the sea by the island of Sottomarina, is certainly worth a visit for its urban fabric, the vertical lines of *piazze* and canals intersecting with the horizontal lines of the streets; their order and near perfect regularity making a classic fishbone shape.

Across the river Brenta by the bridge from Chioggia is **Ca' Lino**. To get to the Po Delta area we must first cross another important river, the Adige, whose Delta marks the end of the Venice lagoon. The Adige estuary is fairly wild still: on one side there is the beach resort of Rosolina Mare, a recently deposited sandy area including Porto Caleri and the island of Albarella (not on our itinerary). On the other side and inland is Rosolina itself, and near that **Porto Levante**. The Po di

Chioggia



Sacca degli Scardovari

Levante, at the extreme north of the Delta, is not an active branch of the river, but is kept alive by a canal.

Marina di Porto Levante is an ideal departure point from which to discover the splendid islands of the Venetian lagoon or as far as the Croatian coast; also a good place to try your hand at the absorbing sport of deep sea fishing.

From Porto Levante we head towards **Ca' Venier**: everywhere you look there are strong images, reflective or poetic, but always inspiring and of great evocative power; the bicycle is the best transport to appreciate these nuances of nature. Ca' Venier is an island enclosed by the Po di Venezia to the south, and by the Po di Maistra to the west and north; cross the river and head towards **Ca' Mello**, a reclaimed area of 40 hectares, and onto the **Sacca degli Scardovari** which we follow round as far as Santa Giulia.



The landscape of the Sacca degli Scardovari changes colour by the seasons, through the various shades of grey and blue; on one side the sea water, on the other fresh water from canals, ponds and flooded fields. In amongst this are buildings used by fisher-folk, and beside them anchorages for the boats they call "vongolare" - the Sacca is today a centre for the cultivation of clams and mussels, and is one of the biggest European centres for the production of mussels.

At **Santa Giulia**, an important stop for anyone visiting the Po Delta, we cross the Po di Gnocca (otherwise known as Po della Donzella) by a pontoon bridge, and head for Gorino Veneto or Gorino Sullam, named after a Jewish family who used to farm there. At **Gorino Veneto** another pontoon bridge takes us across the Po di Goro and into Ferrara province at **Gorino Ferrarese**. At this point the route turns onto the Destra Po Cycle-tourism path, to be followed back to our final destination, **Ferrara**. (see Routes around Ferrara **No.1**, p.34).