

Venice Lagoon islands

San Francesco del Deserto

An oasis of peace and meditation

Venice is an archipelago: there are about seventy-one lagoon islands which come in various sizes and are more or less densely inhabited, embracing the historic city, characterised by ancient productive, conventual and military settlements. And without a doubt, the lagoon islands are places of often still wild beauty, suggesting to those who set foot for the first time find themselves in another, timeless world. To the south of Burano, not far from Torcello, in a secluded and quiet corner of the lagoon, which the boat lines do not get to, rises San Francesco del Deserto, a small island that hosts a convent of minor friars, one of the last

hermitages of the lagoon. An oasis of peace and meditation, where the silence is broken only by the singing of the birds that live here undisturbed. This is certainly the ideal place for those who want to get away even for an hour from the crowds that invade the city and the other islands of the lagoon of Venice especially during the summer months, but also to spend a few days in peace, silence and meditation. An island which is perfect for a short flight from the world, strolling in the greenery of secular cypresses and pines, admiring the landscape of mud flats and salt marshes, the landmass of the lagoon, covered with thick vegetation.



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The green & fair-trade map of Venice

Fuorirota. The other Map of Venice - 2014 edition collects all the information, advice, ideas for the travellers, looking for **sustainable, original and supportive tourism** in Venice, in the lagoon and on the mainland, as well as for the Venetians, who want to adopt a more dedicated and conscious life style, both as for everyday shopping and as for their cultural choices. It is not only a map: **Fuorirota. The other Map of Venice** lends itself to be used as a real guide to get around in the city and discover the eco-friendly, cultural and local-oriented initiatives, to get to know unknown sites, to enjoy the parks and the natural areas, to eat organic and zero-mile food, shopping in craftsmen's and fair trade shops.

For further information, please visit:
www.veneziaunica.it/it/content/fuori-rotta-laltra-mappa-di-venezia



Between history and legend

According to tradition, in 1220 Saint Francis of Assisi, on board a Venetian ship returning from pilgrimage to the Holy Land, landed on the island, at the time called "delle Do Vigne". Here the saint was accepted by the singing of a multitude of birds: recounts his biographer St. Bonaventure of Bagnoregio. A few years after the death of Francis, the owner of the island, the Venetian patrician Jacopo Michiel, erected a chapel in honour of the poor man of Assisi, the first dedicated to the saint, and donated the

island to the Franciscan Friars, to build a convent. The name of the place dates back to a couple of centuries later, when in the Fifteenth Century the insulation and the unhealthiness of the place forced the Franciscans to abandon the island, which was deserted for some years. In 1451 the island was granted to Friars Minor sent in to restore the church and the convent, who also built the Renaissance cloister. At the end of that same century, Pope Clement VIII settled the Reformed Friars Minor therein. The latter order remained on the island until 1806, when the Napoleonic suppression of religious orders forced the friars to leave the island, while the

convent was used for the storage of explosives and the island itself became a military barracks. In 1856, the Austrian Emperor Francis I gave the island to the Patriarch of Venice, who in turn granted it in perpetuity to the Franciscan Friars Minor. In 1858 came the work of restoration of the entire complex, that brought to light not only the apses of the oratory but also the foundations of the ancient thirteenth-century church, which is in turn built on a building with two compartments. Nowadays the church with the two cloisters, one dating back to the thirteenth century and the other from the Renaissance period, are places of prayer for a small community of Franciscans.

Visit to the hermitage

The island of San Francesco del Deserto is open to anyone who wants to visit it during the day, from 9 am to 11 am and from 3 pm to 5 pm, every day except Mondays. Visitors are greeted and escorted throughout their visit by a Franciscan friar. The island is within easy reach of Burano by private boat: the connection is guaranteed every day - except on Mondays - at 2.30 pm; the journey to and from the island takes about ten minutes and

costs 10 euro. Once off the boat, visitors walk along a tree-lined avenue that leads to the church, flanked by the bell tower and by the convent. The door to the right leads to the first cloister, recently restored, and the nearby fifteenth-century cloister, with a baroque well-curb at its centre. Among the works of art and the paintings of various origins, visitors can see the Four Crowned Saints attributed to Jacopo Tintoretto and Andrea Meldolla, called Schiavone. The beautiful garden, very well maintained by the friars, is also worth a visit. Walking along the path visitors reach two panoramic terraces, with gorgeous views of the beautiful landscape of the surrounding lagoon.

In retreat on the island

The friars welcome those who wish to retreat for a few days in the silence and solitude of the convent: visitors can book in advance, can stay on the island to spend three days following the rhythms of the Franciscans, usually from Friday afternoon to Sunday lunchtime. Guests share moments of prayer and meals with the community. The visitors stay in a home providing single rooms with shared bathrooms.





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Useful Info

To get to the island of San Francesco del Deserto from the historical centre of Venice, take public waterbus line 12 from Fondamente Nove up to Burano. For timetables please refer to the website of the public transportation company: www.actv.it

To reach the island of San Francesco del Deserto from Burano with the shuttle service, you can contact in advance www.lagunaescursioni.com

To stay and spend a few days on the island of San Francesco del Deserto, call the phone number 041 5286863 at meal times. For more information visit the website of the Franciscan convent: www.sanfrancescodeldeserto.it