

Venice, the City Swallowed by the Sea



Venice, once a glorious city that welcomed millions of tourists every year is now nothing more than a shell of its former self. Departing from the mainland on the Via della Libertà nothing seems amiss in the city of love until you realise that the usual hubbub of pedestrians is absent. Side streets that were once a writhing sea of tourists now lie empty, save for the occasional tourist gondola come to see the ruins of a bygone era. Opportunistic locals advertise their cheaply made memorabilia sold in their floating shops to unsuspecting visitors on their way to the remains of Venice. The cries of “authentic venetian masks” and “cheap Murano glass” echo across the bay.

This flood may lead us think that the economy in Venice is completely halted. Nevertheless, curious tourists that want to see what a “Modern Atlantis” looks like

keep coming to visit the forsaken city while the locals keep fighting against the constantly rising water levels. In fact, they do everything they can to try and revitalise the economy of their country. Merchants of all kinds have tried to adapt to these new circumstances with varying degrees of success. The shopkeepers’ solution was to set up floating shops on gondolas and other watercraft. As a result, tourists can now buy all the things they used to buy in local shops on these boats. In addition to that, the classic gondola tour business model didn’t falter. Restaurant chefs were hired by humanitarian agencies to help feed those who can’t afford to feed themselves. Boats equipped with a satellite have become gathering spots that reinforce the strong bonds within the community.

Ever since the rising of the water, the Venetian's' lifestyle has drastically changed. The Venetians had to adapt very quickly to climate change and find alternatives to old services. The healthcare system was in turmoil and has only re-established itself. We interviewed a 16-year-old boy about how he manages to live in an underwater city.

-Good afternoon, Antonio many people are wondering how the younger generation is dealing with the rising water levels here, in Venice. How did your life change when the water level rose above the canal walls?

- Well, the rising of the water has hugely transformed the way I live in many ways.

Firstly, the main change is for sure the way we travel around the city. Schools have become "vaperettos" that only hold one class at a time. My parents have become tour guides to profit off the still thriving tourist industry in Venice. My friends and I that still live here see each other much less often so when do get to meet up it's a special occasion. Life here might be difficult, but I wouldn't leave it for the world.

If Venice is to stand any hope of rebuilding what it once had, the Venetians must properly regulate tourists and what they can do in the city. Venice was, is, and always will be a city of compassion, interdependence and love as long as it still stands