

ITALY

Venice and its Lagoon

Brief description

Founded in the 5th century and spread over 118 small islands, Venice became a major maritime power in the 10th century. The whole city is an extraordinary architectural masterpiece in which even the smallest building contains works by some of the world's greatest artists such as Giorgione, Titian, Tintoretto, Veronese and others.

1. Introduction

Year(s) of Inscription 1987

Agency responsible for site management

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2. Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria C (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi)

Justification provided by the State Party

La proposition d'inscription de la ville de Venise ainsi que des centres historiques mineurs et de la lagune sur la liste du patrimoine mondiale est fondée sur la valeur exceptionnelle et universelle de ces sites.

Venise répond parfaitement à tous les points énoncés dans le questionnaire.

- Il s'agit d'une réalisation artistique et esthétique unique au monde, l'un des chefs d'œuvres de l'esprit créateur de l'homme.

- Depuis toujours, Venise a influencé considérablement le développement successif de la sculpture, de la musique, de la peinture, de la poésie.

- Venise constitue un exemple unique d'installation de bâtiments dans un environnement tout à fait particulier.

- Il s'agit d'un témoignage caractéristique d'une structure urbaine médiévale.

- Venise a été une source très vive d'inspiration sur le plan artistique et culturel et le lieu où se sont déroulés des événements historiques d'une grande importance.

As provided in ICOMOS/IUCN evaluation

Venice meets all the criteria for inclusion on the World Heritage List.

- Criterion I. Venice is a unique artistic achievement. The city is built on 118 small islands and seems to float on the waters of the lagoon, composing an unforgettable landscape whose imponderable beauty inspired Canaletto, Guardi, Turner and many other painters. The city reveals itself instantly. The lagoon of Venice also includes one of the highest concentrations of masterpieces in the world: from Torcello Cathedral to the church of St. Mary of Salvation, all the centuries of an extraordinary Golden Age are represented by monuments of exceptional beauty: San Marco, the Palazzo Ducale, Zanipolo and Scuola di San Marco, the Grari and Scuola di San ROCCO, San Giorgio Maggiore, etc.

- Criterion II. The influence of Venice on the development of architecture and monumental arts has been considerable. It first made its impact in all the trading markets and stations of the Most Serene Republic along the shores of Dalmatia, in Asia Minor and in Egypt, in the islands of Ionian Sea, in Euboea, in Peloponnesus, in Crete, and in Cyprus, where the monuments built were inspired by Venetian models. But at the time when this empire of the seas experienced its first defeats, Venice founded a school of a very different type, thanks to its painters. Bellini and Giorgione, then Titien, Tintoret, Veronese and Tiepolo so profoundly changed the perception of space, light and colour that they made a decisive mark on trends in painting and decoration in Europe.

- Criterion III. With the unusualness of an archaeological site which still breathes life, Venice bears testimony unto itself. This mistress of the seas is a link between the East and the West, between Islam and Christianity; she lives on through thousands of monuments and vestiges of a time gone by.

- Criterion IV. Venice possesses an incomparable series of architectural ensembles illustrating the age of its splendour. From great monuments such as Piazza San Marco and Piazzetta (the cathedral, the Palazzo Ducale, Marciana, correr Museum,

Procuratie Vecchie), to the more modest residences of call and campi in its six quarters (Sestieri), and including hospitals and charitable or cooperative institutions which in the 13th century were originally Scuole, medieval Venetian architecture, presents a complete typology whose exemplary value goes hand-in-hand with the outstanding character of an urban setting which had to adapt to the special requirements of the site.

- Criterion V. In the Mediterranean area, the lagoon of Venice constitutes an outstanding example of a semi-lake settlement which has become vulnerable as a result of irreversible changes. In this coherent ecosystem where the bareness, muddy ground which alternately sinks below water level and then rises again, are as important as the islands, the houses standing on piles, the fishing villages, and the rice-fields need as much protection as the palaces and the churches.

- Criterion VI. Venice symbolizes the victorious struggle of mankind against the elements, and the mastery men and women have imposed upon hostile nature. The city is also directly and tangibly associated with universal history. The "Queen of the Seas," heroically gripping to her tiny islands, did not limit her horizon, either to the lagoon, or to the Adriatic, or to the Mediterranean. It was from Venice that Marco Polo (1254-1324) set out in search of China, Annam, Tonkin, Sumatra, India and Persia. His tomb at San Lorenzo recalls the role assumed by Venetian merchants in the discovery of the world- after the Arabs, but well before the Portuguese.

Committee Decision

Bureau (1987): The Bureau noted that the inscription of Venice and its lagoon on the World Heritage List could only reinforce the safeguarding activities already implemented within the framework of the international campaign.

- Statement of Significance does not adequately defines the outstanding universal value of the site
- Proposal for text has not been made by State Party but is requested
- Additional change proposed by State Party, for UNESCO's official description of the site: The description should define better the characters of the urban network and of the building types and it should pay more attention to morphological and landscape characters of the Lagoon

Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Status of boundaries of the site: adequate
- No buffer zone has been defined. Since the Lagoon is a natural form of defence for the cities, it can be considered an adequate protection for the site

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- World Heritage site values have been maintained
- Changes in the hydraulic system of the Lagoon. Social changes of the Town and smaller villages with subsequent not appropriate use of buildings (risk of emptying the Town and refilling it with hotels and guest houses)

3. Protection

Legislative and Administrative Arrangements

- Special legislation for the defence of Venice and its Lagoon with the realization of measures of restoration and conservation of the historical building frame and measures for protection of the Lagoon and of the Town and villages from flooding
- The protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective

Actions taken:

- Organization, managing and financial actions; Municipality of Venezia, Regional Authority of Veneto, at national, regional and local level

4. Management

Use of site/property

- Urban centre

Management /Administrative Body

- Management by the State Party; under protective legislation
- Site manager
- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: national, regional, local. Other public offices and public and private, national and international Associations
- The current management system is sufficiently effective

Actions proposed:

- Morphological and hydraulic conservation of the Lagoon. Ongoing
- Conservation of monumental and architectural heritage. Ongoing
- Planning of tourist movements. Ongoing

5. Management Plan

- Management plan under preparation, to be completed December 2006
- Responsibility for the preparation of the management plan: Municipality of Venezia, Direzione Centrale Sviluppo del territorio e Mobilita

6. Financial Resources

Financial situation

- State Budget
- UNESCO International Campaign
- Private Associations from abroad
- Insufficient

7. Staffing Levels

- Adequate professional staff in conservation and protection of buildings and monuments
- Not adequate staff resources for protection, maintenance and promotion of the site, lack of economical resources
- Support of regular volunteers: several associations specialized in single matters concerning Venice and its Lagoon (history, culture, etc.) their work is mostly autonomous; therefore it is not possible to direct them with a supervision of their activities

Rate of access to adequate professional staff across the following disciplines:

- Good: conservation, interpretation, education
- Average: management, promotion, visitor management

8. Sources of Expertise and Training in Conservation and Management Techniques

- Several specialized expertise, training and services are available for the site: Museum management with conservation of the art works;
 - Art, landscape and architectural expertise
 - Libraries and archives
 - Institutes for transmission of traditional artistic handcraft
- There is still need for learning restoration and conservation of monuments, art works. Not enough developed is the conservation of landscape and natural features

9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics: 3.018.609 (number of tourist arriving in Town, all islands, mainland of Venice; source: Tourist Board Venice), 2004
- Visitor facilities: accommodation, transport, cultural institutions, all kind of facilities could be found in a major town

10. Scientific Studies

- Risk assessment; Studies related to the value of the site; monitoring exercises; condition surveys; Archaeological surveys; transportation surveys

11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- No signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem is not used on publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage among: visitors, local communities, businesses, local authorities
- The designation as a World heritage is not sufficiently recognized
- Web site available

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

Reactive monitoring reports

- N/A

Conservation interventions

- Conservation of historical and monumental buildings, conservation and protection of the Lagoon
- Present state of conservation: patchy

Threats and Risks to site

- Environmental pressure; number of inhabitants; visitor/tourism pressure
- Specific issues: problems of flooding phenomena and of simultaneous lowering of city level; reduction of people living and producing in historical centre; Tourist monoculture

Emergency measures taken/ planned:

- Protecting Lagoon from high floods by building a series of mobile barriers on the ground of the sea-lagoon. Timeframe 2012
- Improvement for the maintenance of traditional resident population and activities; Inhabitants leave Venice to move onto the mainland,

productive activities follow the inhabitants. In Venice can persist only tourist activities. No action was planned except from some interventions in social housing. Timeframe not defined

- Protection of traditional activities, habits and commerce from problems linked to tourism; Tourist masses invading the town influence productive activities, habits, commerce and price explosion. No action is planned, because there is no clear opinion on how to manage the problem. Timeframe not defined

13. Monitoring

- No formal monitoring programme
- Measures taken/planned: A co-ordination of the different public offices and associations working with the conservation of Venice should be created to develop a program to identify the major criteria to monitor the status of its architectural and landscape features and decide the most effective actions to achieve the conservation and protection aims

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: conservation, management
- Strengths/Weaknesses of management: the infrastructure and access system

Future actions:

- General urban and traffic planning; planning and realization of several traffic interventions. The realization of several terminals on the mainland should develop the network of transport and access ways into the city centre. Responsible authority: Municipality of Venezia