

venice

THE SMOOTH GUIDE THE LONG LUXURIOUS WEEKEND

Enhanced by a little 21st century style, the charms of La Serenissima have never been more compelling. Rachel Spence enjoys seductive sleepovers, sushi bars and seriously sexy shopping.

rococo jewelbox with an abundance of fire doors. Getting tickets for the grand operas is a challenge, but season-ticket holders sometimes release their seats, so a last-minute call to the box office can reap gold. The ideal post-opera supper is one of the quintet of lobster dishes at Centrale, a chic bar-restaurant with a film-studio feel.

Sunday morning, join the Venetians clustered around their espressi in the backroom bar of Florian, the 18th century coffee house on San Marco. Then dip under the arcades on the north side of the piazza and visit the Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa gallery. Long-established as a patron of contemporary arts in Venice, the Fondazione is now attracting artists of international calibre.

Right now, however, homebred creativity is riding a wave, as a new generation remain in – or return to – their city.

Contemporary Venetian artists find wall space at the Michela Rizzo gallery close to the Ducal Palace. Over at San Moisè, Margherita Passotto's flamboyant handbags tempted Imelda Staunton. Also bewitching are the beaded silks and chiffons run up by Anglo-Italian sister act, Godi Fiorenza, who also sell jewellery, leatherware, cushions and throws.

From there, it's a step over Rialto bridge to the showroom of the Attombri brothers. Romeo Gigli garlands his models in their body jewellery, wrought from silver wire and Murano glass pearls. Still more stunning are their jewellery-wreathed sculptures lampworked in glass by maestro

Lucio Bobacco, whose works are collected by Elton John.

The singer, a part-time Venice resident, has also availed himself of the sublime vessels of Massimo Micheluzzi, whose artistry

THE HIT LIST

HOTELS

Prices are for two people sharing a double room, including breakfast.

Bauer Il Palazzo, San Marco 1413/D (0039041-520 7022; www.ilpalazzovenezia.com); from £558.

DD724, Dorsoduro 724 (0039041-277 0262; www.dd724.it); from £154.

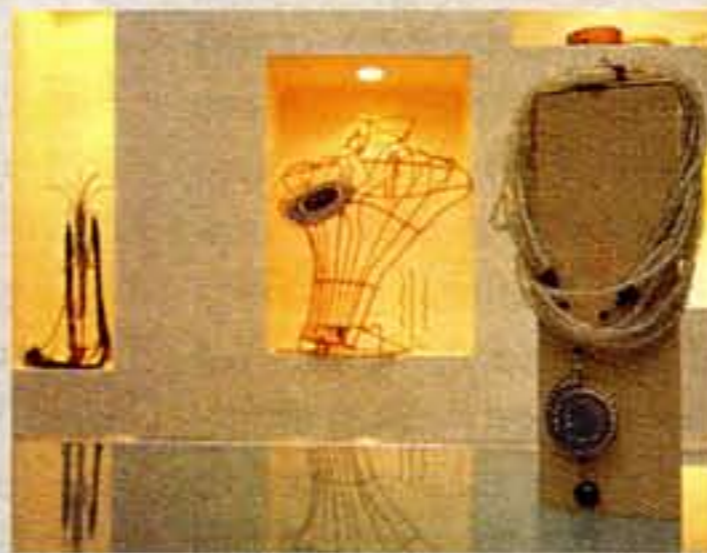
Hotel Cipriani, Giudecca 10 (0039041-520 7744; www.hotelcipriani.com); from £563.

Palazzo Abadessa, Cannaregio 4011 (0039041-241 3784; www.abadessa.com); from £172.

CAFES, BARS AND RESTAURANTS

Prices are for a three-course meal for one with half a bottle of wine.

Avogaria, Dorsoduro 1629, calle dell'Avogaria (0039041-296 0491); £40.



Caffè Florian, San Marco 5252 (0039041-520 5641). **Centrale**, San Marco 1659, piscina Frezzeria (0039041-296 0664); £35. **Il Muro**, San Polo 222, campo Cesare Battisti (0039041-523 7495); £35. **La Naranzaria**, San Polo 130, Naranzaria (0039041-724 1035). **Osteria da Fiore**, San Polo 2202, calle del Scaleter (0039041-721 308); from £80. **Il Refolo**, Santa Croce 1459, campo San Giacomo dell'Orto (0039041-520 0016); £20.

SHOPS

Attombri (pictured left), San Polo 74, sottoportico Orafi (0039041-521 2524).

Galleria Michela Rizzo, San Marco 4254, calle degli Albanesi (0039041-522 3186). **Godi Fiorenza**, San Marco 4261, rio terà San Paternian (0039041-241 0866). **Ikona Venezia**, Cannaregio 2909, campo del Ghetto Nuovo (0039041-520 5854). **Margerie**, campiello de la Feltina 25511/B (0039041-523 6393). **Micheluzzi**, Dorsoduro 1071, fondamenta Bollani (0039041-528 2190).

SITES

Ca' Rezzonico, Dorsoduro 3136 (0039041-241 0100), 10am-6pm, Wed-Mon. **Casanova Spa**, Hotel Cipriani, Giudecca 10 (0039041-240 8016).

Church of San Nicolò dei Mendicoli,