

Venezia



Lido





The golden sands of Venice

Floating between the sea and the lagoon is the beautiful island of the Lido of Venice. Thanks to the continual coming and going of ferries it is easy to get to – even by car. And there is nowhere like it in the world: it has everything to offer, including the magic of the city republic - the San Marco bell tower is but ten minutes away by ferry. There is the fascination of the lagoon and the priceless heritage of the past. Kilometres of golden sands offer something for everyone: those who seek the elegance of the celebrated beach huts, those who prefer the simplicity of a deckchair under an umbrella, or the sand dunes and Mediterranean flora of the natural beaches. Following careful environmental works, the sea has grown cleaner year after year. There are exclusive hotels as well as cosy guesthouses; elite restaurants and family diners. Superb accommodation and excellent facilities make the Lido an ideal choice for requirements of every kind. Fine amenities are offered for every kind of sporting or recreational activity.





The birth of a legend

Legend tells us that the English poet George Byron was the first to fall in love with the Lido. At the beginning of the 19th century he used to gallop his horse along the deserted beaches before diving into the water in front of the Church of San Nicolò, to swim energetically all the way back to Palazzo Mocenigo, which he shared with dogs, monkeys, wolves, foxes, birds and animals of every kind. The first real bathing establishment was however opened in 1857 by cavalier Giovanni Busetto known as "Fisola" (diver). And "Fisola" is what the baths

were called. Under various names they survived until the Second World War, and during their heyday in the Belle Époque, they gradually became the symbol of the Lido. This was the decade in which the legend of the Venice's seaside beach was born, partly due to its hotels that were growing in elegance and exclusiveness, and the fact that its guests were now composed of the crowned heads of Europe, and actors and actresses, and important industrial magnates or finance wizards. The members of the Greek royal family allowed themselves to be photographed while they pranced in a line in and around the umbrellas. Children dressed in sailor suits would build sandcastles under the severe eye of the Ciga Hotel Group inspectors dressed like naval officers. Photos yellowed with age. But it was here - among the long bathing trunks and over-blouses, the plus fours and the trumpeters who at sunset sounded the bathers' call to dinner - that the Lido's rise to fame took root. And still today the Lido attracts tens of thousands of tourists. Year after year they are drawn back by the possibility of enjoying the splendid beach at the same time as the magic of Venice, and by the special atmosphere that the island has always evoked.



The beach

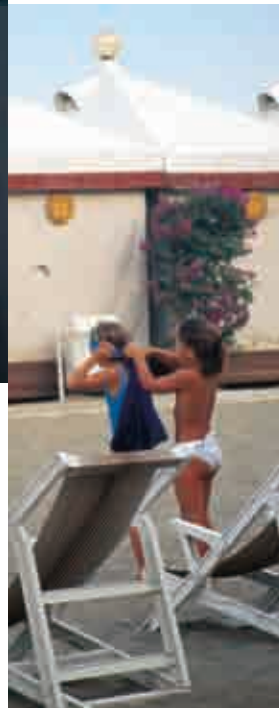
Twelve kilometres in length, from the breakwater of San Nicolò to that of Malamocco situated in Alberoni, the two extreme ends of the beach are left untouched (to the extent that today they are among the longest natural stretches of beach in Italy). Over one hundred metres wide in parts, the beach has made the Lido's fortune thanks to the very fine velvet golden sand. The finest names in world have been walking on this sand since the time the luxurious "La Favorita" pavilion was built for the exclusive use of the royal family in the second half of the 19th century - when Victor Emmanuel III would play there under the watchful eye of Queen Margherita. History alone, though marked by dips in the >>

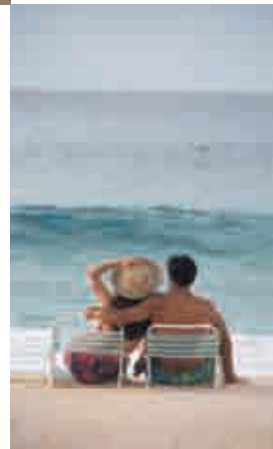






sea by Errol Flynn, Doris Duke or Mata Hari, would not however have been sufficient to keep the Lido in the limelight of the world's famous beaches. Even legends can grow old. If the Venice seaside has remained fascinating enough to sail into the Third Millennium after a full century and a half of catering for tourists it is because it has always known how to be faithful to itself. Elegant. Reserved. It is even aristocratic perhaps, in some ways, but without ever becoming too posh and without breaking





with its most popular traditions. The Lido has resisted chaos, scuffles around the beach umbrellas, the noisy throngs. Rather, it is frequented by a fond cliental of both international millionaires and quiet family groups from the provinces. Many return year after year, not only from all over Italy but also from America or Japan. Washed by a warm calm sea, thanks to the strict measures taken it has become so clean again.

In these pages and in the preceding ones:
Seaside moments on the beach of the Lido yesterday and today

Explore the Lido



Sant'Andrea's Fortress

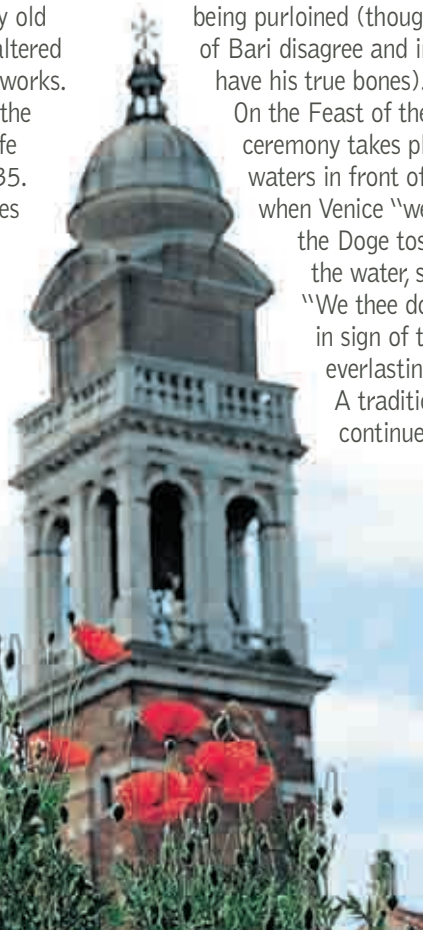
The Lido littoral at San Nicoletto

The Monastery of San Nicolò

The Monastery of San Nicolò is in the historic and monumental heart of the island and was its main proprietor until the late 18th century. This very old Romanesque monastery was altered during succeeding restoration works. The church has a single nave; the choir, with bas-reliefs on the life of San Nicolò, dates from 1635. The small paintings on the sides are by Palma il Giovane and Palma il Vecchio. But apart from these works of art, the elegant 16th century cloister, and the baroque bell tower, the monastery became particularly renowned when in 1099 the body of

San Nicolò, Bishop of Myra on the coast of Lycia - and patron saint of all seafarers - was brought here after being purloined (though the citizens of Bari disagree and insist that they have his true bones).

On the Feast of the Ascension a ceremony takes place in the waters in front of the monastery when Venice "weds the sea": the Doge tosses a ring into the water, saying: "We thee do wed, o sea, in sign of true and everlasting dominion". A tradition which still continues today.



The Fort

The Fort of San Nicolò has been altered over the centuries in the course of continual consolidation works. Along with the fort opposite, across the waters, on the Isle of Sant'Andrea it is the keystone of Venice fortifications. Until the construction of the long breakwater at the Lido inlet that led to the expansion of Punta Sabbioni, the sea in point of fact washed the shore of the Island of Sant'Erasmo (today "set back" inside the lagoon); and thanks to a series of providential sandbanks that the Venetians made maximum use of to defend the city, whoever entered St Mark's Basin had to pass along a not very wide channel right in front of San Nicolò.

In the mid-16th century the decision was made to reinforce the garrison to the maximum. The Fort was a huge complex that included barracks, a gunpowder factory, soldiers quarters, the monastery, mills and such rowdy taverns that the friars did nothing but complain of the "continuae turpitudines et abominaciones". There is one interesting detail that shows that Venice was something of a democracy: all the forts were constructed to be very strong and threatening when seen from the sea, but were weak and open towards the hinterland. So it was clear that they would never be used against the Venetians.



The Monastery of San Nicolò



The Jewish Cemetery

The earliest gravestone in the very old Jewish Cemetery on the Lido is that of a certain Samuel' El B. Shishon who died in 1389, but the opening of what is one of the most interesting and awe-inspiring cemeteries in the world dates from three years earlier when Salomone and Crisante, the representatives of the Israelite community, obtained from the Public Magistrates Office some uncultivated terrain next to the Monastery of the Benedictines. Since then and tombstone after tombstone (those of the Coen family bear bas-reliefs of benedictory hands, those of the Levi family water pitchers and basins), the place has gradually become evidence of the Jews establishing themselves in Venice where, in 1516, that "Ghetto" was established that lent its name to all the world's Jewish districts.



Art nouveau villas

The years during which the Lido rapidly became a fashionable resort for the wealthy Italian and international genteel classes at the beginning of last century left the island with a precious heritage: an array of villas and houses in the Italian Liberty style (mainly art nouveau) almost invariably set in well-tended flower gardens with avenues and belvederes, or even with parks in which over the years majestic trees have grown. An array of precious architectural jewels among which Villino Krebster-Beltrami, Bersò di Villa Madonna, Villino Monplaisir, Casa del Farmacista and Villa delle Palme stand out in particular.



The Jewish Cemetery
The Liberty Façade of Hotel Hungaria
The Airport

The Airport

A little over a kilometre in length, fifty metres wide and covered with grass, the Nicelli airport runway has a special attraction for flying enthusiasts. Within easy reach of Venice by water bus or taxi, open to Schengen and unrestricted European Union traffic, Nicelli is the original Venice airport. It was opened in 1935 and over the decades it has seen the some of the most famous names in the world land here; it is still popular with and today it is very popular with General Aviation pilots.



The Lido of past times: buildings in Liberty style

Malamocco

Little is known of Metamaucum, probably the first centre of habitation in the lagoon. For a long time it was the port of Patavium (ancient Padua). Abruptly, perhaps owing to a seaquake or a sudden environmental change, it disappeared, its place being taken (it is not known if on the same site) by Novo Metamauco, in due time becoming present-day Malamocco. What is certain is that the village from which Rustego of Torcello and Bon of Malamocco set out in 828 for Alexandria in order to daringly purloin the body of St Mark, was the first dioceses and the first "home" of the lagoon State. It became so in 742 when Teodato Ipato





transferred the ducal capital here from Eraclea; and it remained here (under succeeding Doges) until 811 when the government was transferred to Rivoalto (the high banks or Rialto) at the centre of the group of islets on which Venice was beginning to develop. From those early and most glorious times the inhabitants continued to enjoy certain privileges for centuries. Of Novo Metamauco there remains the plan of a little Venice with alleys and little squares and canals and houses backing on to one another - a village full of light and charm.





The coastal dunes of Alberoni

At one time, in spring, the Alberoni dunes were periodically levelled out with bulldozers. Fortunately, nowadays they have again been delivered up to the force of the wind and the vagaries of the currents. In a short time the southernmost tip of the island has regained its original appearance, to the point of being re-considered as one of the WWF's protected oases. Now the beach, which has been widening over the last decades with the sand that has built up owing to the long outer breakwater, is left intact, just as it is. The dunes host a rich variety of animal and plant species. A natural paradise populated with Kentish plovers and little terns which also nest on the beach, as well as Sardinian warblers, Cirl buntings, Egyptian nightjars and birds of prey like the Levant sparrowhawk and the American kestrel. As you walk along the shoreline you will see peregrine falcons, honey buzzards and black kites, and may also spot reptiles and amphibians like the coluber, the country lizard and the European green toad. The dune vegetation is home to species that are characteristic of sandy coastlines, including Ravenna cane, meadow orchis, black bog rush, sea medick and *Cyperus kalli*, protected by pine trees, poplars and tamarisks.



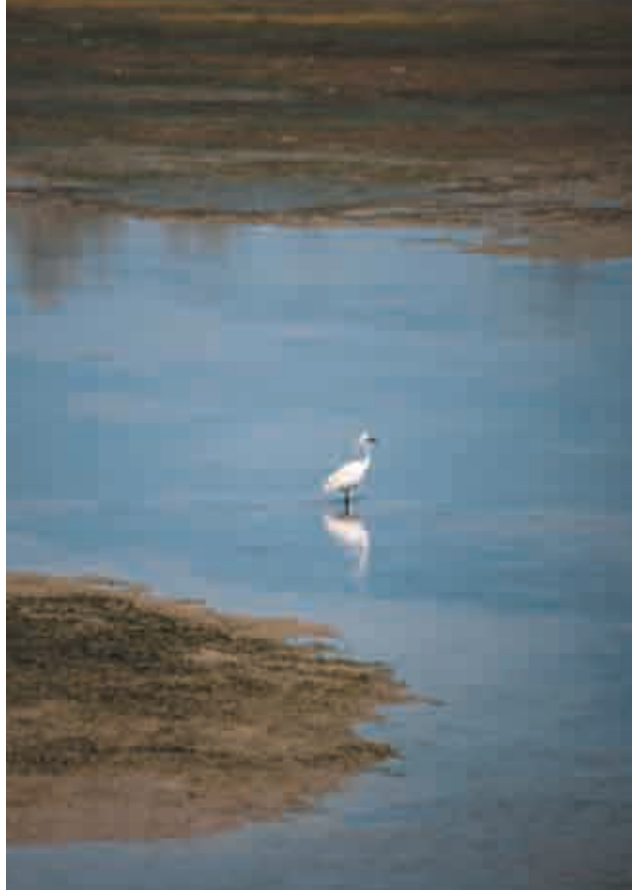
The seawalls

In the summer the rocks in front of the Murazzi sea wall are occupied by Venetians, but not only Venetians, who want to sun themselves in absolute peace, prepared to forego the luxury of the private beaches. The purpose of the seawalls - the huge embankments constructed in the second half of the 18th century, a little before the Venice Republic fell to Napoleon - was always to protect the most exposed points of the islands of the littoral from great sea storms. Improved in the 19th century by the great hydro engineer Pietro Paleocapa (who conceived the breakwaters at the port inlets), they were gradually put in place and constantly reinforced and maintained at great expense: they are, after all, entrusted with safeguarding the most beautiful city in the world.

Venice Lido, the lagoon entrance at Alberoni and the island of Pellestrina with its seawalls



A little egret in the North Lagoon
One of the marvellous sunsets from the Lido looking towards Venice



The lagoon

Situated in the centre of the system of islands that protect Venice from the sea, the island of the Lido is the ideal departure point for anyone wishing to get to know the two sectors of the lagoon. The South Lagoon, with beautiful wide open spaces; the rivers like the Cornio that can be climbed as they were by the King of Sparta, Cleonimo - 2500 years ago; the WWF oasis at Valle Averte, populated by mammals (even free-ranging buffalo) and birds of every kind; the fishing villages like San Pietro in Volta and Pellestrina. And then on to the North Lagoon, where standing out in the uncontaminated and exquisite panoramas, among fish reserves and old farmhouses, are the tall red bell towers of Murano, Burano, Torcello, and San Francesco del Deserto, extraordinary examples of how man can find an equilibrium with nature.



The South Lagoon seen from the tower of Valle Zappa lodge





Hospitality

For the fabulous gala "Marco Polo at the court of the Grand Khan", the whole beach was covered in Persian rugs and floodlit with enormous torches stuck in the sand. Tables were laden with every bounty with princes and marquises gathered around them; and actresses and opera singers, ministers and industrialists - all dressed in oriental costumes. And every week there was a different party: and one was called "Bacchus and Bacchantes" and another "Caesar and the empire" and the atmosphere was so happy and outré, recounted Pier Maria Paoletti, that "the most enterprising, all naked, in the grand finale at dawn galloped, their white horses chafing at the bit with impatience, over the foaming sand and then up the steps to the hall." And every excuse was good for a party, to the extent that "a noted Venetian noblewoman gave a memorable reception for the

proclamation of the war, and then went to Piazza San Marco with two leopards on leashes joyfully followed by a cortege of young nobles in officers' uniform". This was the Lido "invented" by the great hotels. A unique world that became celebrated from Los Angeles to Tokyo, so much so that the American financier Pierpont Morgan was heard to say that "in America those who have visited Europe talk more about the Excelsior Palace than they do about the Ducal Palace" - a bit of Yankee exaggeration. But it is beyond question that the grand and somewhat Moorish-looking hotel - built by Nicolò Spada and inaugurated on a crowded evening on 21st July 1907 in the presence of three thousand guests, and rendered unforgettable by bright decorations that led from San Marco to the Lido, and lit by grandiose fountains of fireworks - can vaunt that it has



hosted practically all the great personalities of the 20th century. Fame well merited. As is merited that of the other historic hotel on the Lido, the elegant Hotel Des Bains with its clean lines, where Thomas Mann set his famous "Death in Venice", from which Luchino Visconti made an equally renowned film. Two jewels in a range of hotels of the highest quality. Each one, from the most luxurious hotel to the smallest family-run guesthouse, from the most exclusive to the most reasonably priced, contributes to the sober, reserved, efficient, and courteous hospitality that has made the Lido grand.



Few places in the world are as renowned for their gastronomy as Venice and its lagoon. This is due to the fishermen who have known every wave and every inlet of the Adriatic for centuries. Owing to its low salinity and rapid water replacement, the Adriatic is five times more abounding in fish than the Tyrrhenian Sea and is among the most prolific in the world for variety species. Lagoon islands like Sant'Erasmo, Cavallino and the Lido itself have always supplied the markets with the highest quality fruit and vegetables. Merit goes to the Veneto hinterland too; land of extraordinary wines and of a culinary tradition of the highest level both as regards fish and meat. Just think of dishes such as "bigoli in salsa" (hard wheat spaghetti with anchovy sauce) or "fegato alla venexiana" (veal liver cooked in a sweet onion sauce), "sarde in saor" (sardines in sweet & sour sauce) or "masenète" (shelled boiled crabs) or "risi e bisi" (risotto of peas). A richly varied art nouveau menu and subtle tastes are to be found in the restaurants and taverns of the Lido, of San Pietro in Volta and Pellestrina, as well as traditional Italian meals and international cuisine.





Sport

Anyone who loves a holiday spent partly relaxing and partly carrying out physical activity will find the Lido has the answer. Football fields and futsal.

Four public or private tennis clubs.

An indoor bowls area for devotees.

A municipal swimming pool (besides those in the hotels).

An archery green.

A roller skating rink.

A rifle range.

A riding school.

Boat clubs for those wishing to learn to row Venetian style or to learn the secrets of sailing.

A world-famous golf course.

A diving centre for scuba divers.

A water skiing centre.





Golf

The Lido Golf Club was founded in 1928 at the time when Count Giuseppe Volpi di Misurata - still not satisfied despite the boom, though unaware of the triumphs to come - was pondering the "need to re-launch the Lido". Now it is one of the oldest, most beautiful and exclusive golf clubs in Italy. Situated at Alberoni, it has 18 holes, par 72, a 6,199 metre fairway designed by Cruickshanks & Cotton and improved by Marco Croze; a driving range, putting green, pitching green, club house, bar, a restaurant, a drinks stall and a pro-shop. The club hosts high-level international events and has been frequented by some of the finest names in golf. However, what makes it really remarkable is the setting: the age old trees of Alberoni, the canals, the ponds, the sunset over the lagoon, and the bell towers of Venice in the distance.



By bicycle

One of the most beautiful bicycle outings in Italy takes you from one end of the Lido to the other end of Pellestrina; and it's an easy ride (22 kilometres with not a hill in sight). From the breakwater of San Nicolò, point of departure after having disembarked from the ferry at Santa Maria Elisabetta, heading southwards past the art nouveau period villas, little ports, rows of plane trees, and canals, the next stop is Malamocco and then Alberoni, where the ferry leaves for Santa Maria del Mare. From there, having passed the picturesque village of San Pietro in Volta, the ride continues the full length of the island of Pellestrina to the village of the same name, then continuing along the spectacular cycle track that runs behind the seawall to the southern tip, right opposite Chioggia, where there is the oasis of Ca' Roman. This is a natural reserve with the number of birds steadily increasing, especially the plover and shearwater.

The breakwater at Cà Roman
Below, Pellestrina



Pellestrina

The women who used to sit by the dozen in front of their houses whiling the time away making the famous bobbin lace that rivalled Burano needle-lace are quite rare today. The charm of Pellestrina is that so much has remained unchanged: the wharf where the fishing boats moor; the old men sitting on benches repairing the nets; the narrow winding alleys like those in parts of Venice, squares with a well, inns with the tables laden with small octopus, mantis shrimp, sea snails and other tasty fish snacks - and the washing hung out to dry in the sun. Just as over a thousand years ago when the important, romantically named and now vanished city of Albiola stood on the island, there is still the enchanting light on the water. Ask anyone who has seen the fiery red sunset over the lagoon of Pellestrina: an unforgettable sight.





The Film Festival

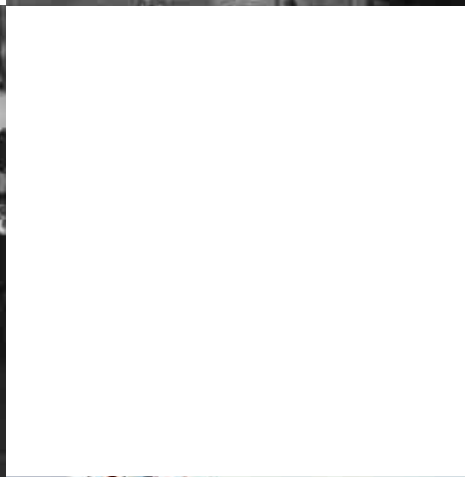
In case of rain, a magic trick had been prepared: the Cinemacchanica projector from Milan would be able to turn away from the open-air screen and illuminate a second screen standing in the ballroom of the Excelsior Hotel, where there were another 700 chairs standing ready for the guests. Outstanding visitors were the ex-king of Spain, Alfonso, Princess Maria Josè, the Prince of Piedmont, the Duke of Miranda, and even the inventors



themselves of the new celluloid art: the Lumière brothers. But the sky that evening of the 6th August 1932, when the great adventure began with the projection of Mamoulian's "Doctor Jecky and Mister Hyde", was clement. And the starry sky was taken as a sign that the Film Festival, the first in the world (Cannes was not born until some 14 years afterwards) was blessed by fate. And so it has been. Surviving the muscular exhibitions and Fascist rhetoric (for the "Mussolini Prize"



Pictures from the Venice Contemporary Art Archives (Asac)



competing films had titles like "Luciano Serra, Pilot"), the Lido Film Festival has continued over the decades to be perhaps the most important for cinema films of a certain quality. It has seen the triumph of films that have become cinema history, like "Rashomon" by Akira Kurasawa, "The Battle of Algiers" by Gillo Pontecorvo, "Rocco and His Brothers" by Luchino Visconti, and "Paisà" by Roberto Rossellini. It has launched dozens of great directors, including recently Emir Kusturica and Zhang Yimou. It has made awards to hundreds of actors and actresses, from Burt Lancaster for "The Man from Alcatraz" to Cate Blanchett for "I am not there".

An island for four seasons

The Lido Congress Centre, the Casino and Palazzo del Cinema, and the Palagallileo



Not only summer. Little by little as the fame of the bathing resort grew with its Italian and international cliental, the Lido "season" has grown progressively longer from week to week, from spring to autumn, until it lasts almost all year round, although summer is the peak.





This is because of the many cultural events, the extraordinary network of hotels, the fact that it lies so near to a Venice that offers the best of itself in the off-season and on certain luminous winter days; the magnificent facilities available (starting with the Casino) for congresses, exhibitions and conventions, the Lido's traditional hospitality. Altogether: from being a mere seaside resort, the Lido has become a island for four seasons.





Boats in the city canals



Ferry Boat to Lido



Malamocco, canal



Lido di Venezia



EXCURSION BY BICYCLE



STEAMER



FERRY-BOAT



AIRPORT



HOSPITAL



INFORMATION



DRAUGHT ARCHERY



RIDING



TARGET SHOOTING



GOLF



TENNIS



BEACH



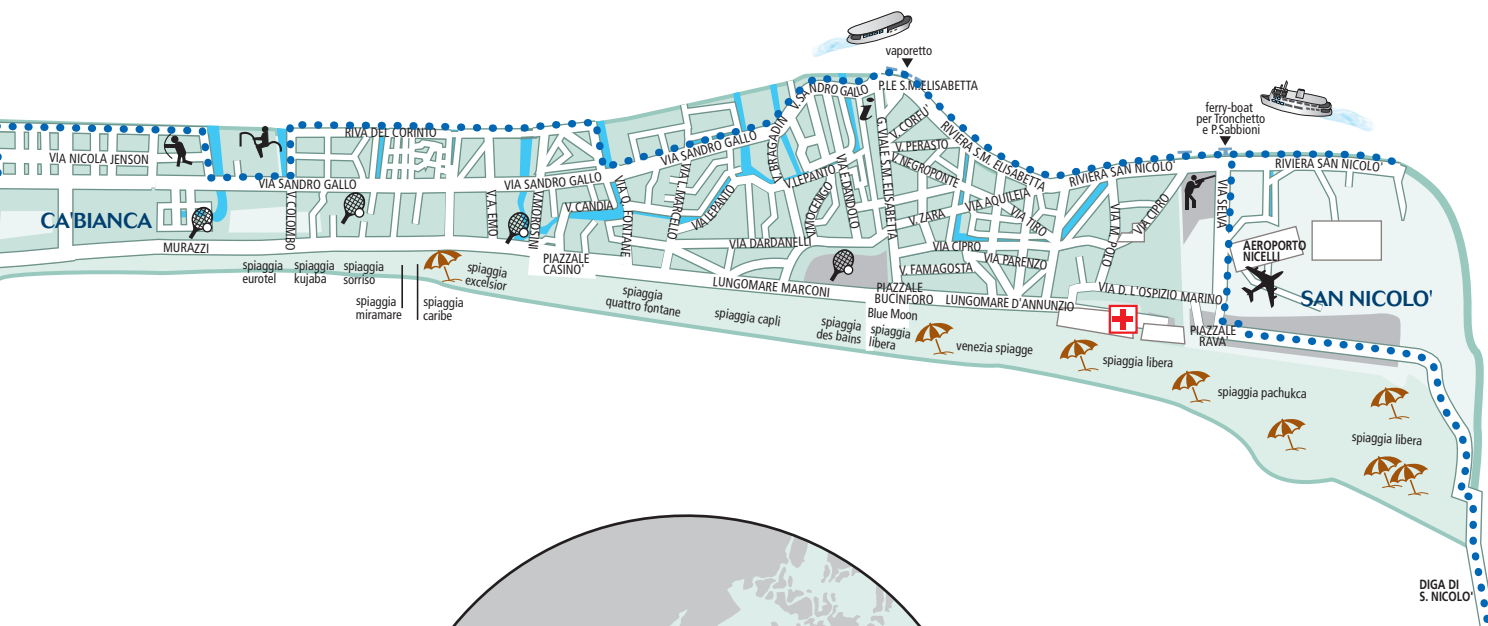
Arrival at the Lido by ferry from Venezia



A Footbridge at Riva del Corinto



Canale a Santa Maria Elisabetta



Venezia

Lido

