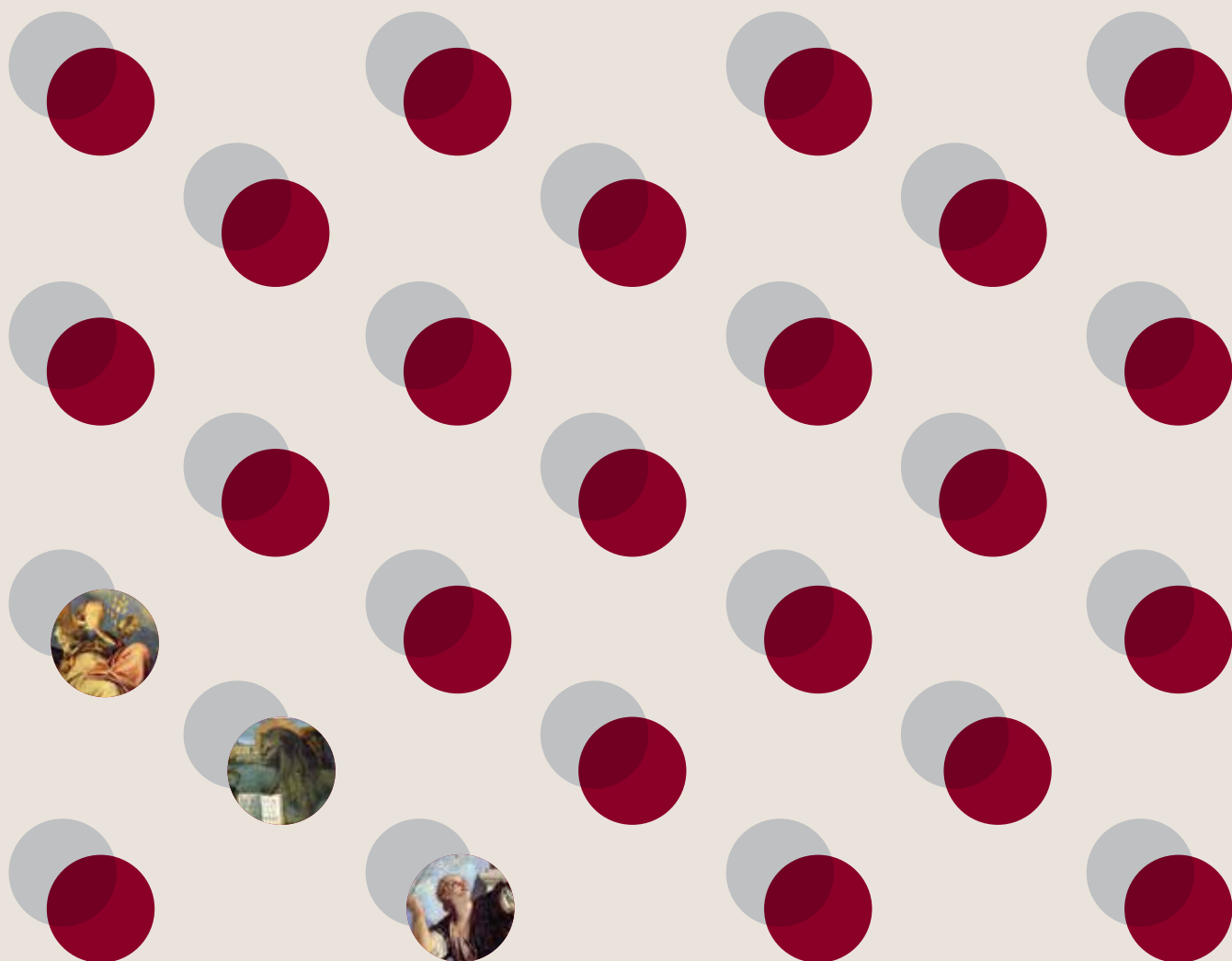


Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia



Palazzo Ducale Doge's Palace



The Palace

A masterpiece of Gothic architecture, the Doge's Palace is an impressive structure composed of layers of building elements and ornamentation, from its 14th and 15th century original foundations to the significant Renaissance and opulent Mannerist adjunctions.

The structure is made up of three large blocks, incorporating previous constructions. The wing towards the St. Mark's Basin is the oldest, rebuilt from 1340 onwards. The wing towards St. Mark's Square was built in its present form from 1424 onwards. The canal-side wing, housing the Doge's apartments and many government offices, dates from the Renaissance and was built between 1483 and 1565.

The History

The origins

The first Doges

The first stable settlements in the lagoon probably came just after the fall of the Western Roman Empire (476). Gradually, these became more established and are considered as outposts of the Byzantine Empire. At the beginning of the 9th century, Venice enjoyed a reasonable level of independence. In 810, Doge Angelo Partecipazio moved the seat of government from the island of Malamocco to the area of Rivoalto (the present-day Rialto), when it was decided the Palazzo Ducale should be built, however, no trace remains of that 9th century building.

The Building

The Old Castle

It is probable that the Palazzo Ducale, being protected by a canal, stout walls and massive corner towers, was an agglomeration of different buildings destined to serve various purposes.

Reached by a large fortified gateway where the Porta della Carta now stands, the buildings within these walls housed public offices, courtrooms, prisons, the Doge's apartments, stables, armories, and other facilities.

The Doge Ziani's Palace

In the 10th century, the Doge's Palace was partially destroyed by a fire, and subsequent reconstruction works were undertaken at the behest of Doge Sebastiano Ziani (1172-1178). A great reformer, Doge Ziani radically changed the layout of the entire St. Mark's Square area.

Two new structures were built for his palace: one facing the Piazzetta – to house courts and legal institutions – and the other overlooking St. Mark's Basin – to house government institutions.

These new palaces probably had all the Byzantine-Venetian architecture characteristic features (such as the Fondaco dei Turchi, which today houses the Natural History Museum), but unfortunately, only few traces of this period remain (e.g. parts of the ground-level wall in



Palazzo Ducale, Venice

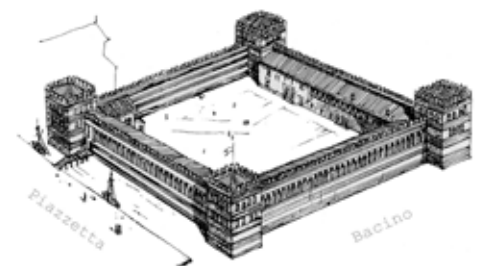


Illustration of the Old Castle (9th-11th centuries)

Istrian stone and some herringbone-pattern brick pavement).

The 14th century palace

At the end of the 13th century it became necessary to extend the palace once more. Political changes in 1297 led to a significant increase in the number of people who had the right to participate in the legislative assembly meetings. The works, which would result in the building that we can see today, started around 1340 under Doge Bartolomeo Gradenigo (1339-1343) and concerned mostly the side of the palace facing the lagoon. In 1365, the Paduan artist Guariento was commissioned to decorate the east wall of the Great Council Chamber with a large fresco, while the room's windows works were done by the Delle Masegne family. The Great Council met in this chamber for the first time in 1419.

Doge Francesco Foscari's Renovations and the 15th century

Only in 1424, when Francesco Foscari was Doge (1423-1457), was it decided to continue the renovation works on the side of the building overlooking the Piazzetta San Marco. The new wing was designed as a continuation of that overlooking the lagoon: a ground-floor arcade on the outside, with open first-floor balconies running along the façade and the internal courtyard side of the wing. The vast Sala dello Scrutinio, formerly the Library, was built at the same floor as the Great Council Chamber, and its large windows and the pinnacled parapet took up the same decorative motifs as had been used previously.

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The Piazzetta's façade was completed with the construction of the Porta della Carta, a work by Giovanni and Bartolomeo Bon. Works on the other wings of the Palace would not come until later. These would start with the construction of the Foscari entrance beyond the Porta della Carta, culminating in the Foscari Arch. This work was not completed until Doge Giovanni Mocenigo's time (1478-1485).

The other wings of the Palace and the various fires in the building (1483-1577)

In 1483, a violent fire broke out in the canal-side of the Palace, which housed the Doge's apartments. Once again, important reconstruction works became necessary and Antonio Rizzo was commissioned, introducing the new Renaissance architectural language to the building. An entirely new structure was raised alongside the canal, from the Ponte della Canonica to the Ponte della Paglia. Works were completed by 1510, and in the meantime Rizzo was replaced by Maestro Pietro Lombardo, who reviewed the decoration of the façade and of the Giants' Staircase in the internal courtyard of the palace. In 1515, Antonio Abbondi, also known as Lo Scarpagnino, took over from Lombardo, finally completing the works by 1559. The 1565 erection of Sansovino's two large marble statues of Mars and Neptune at the top of the Giants' Staircase marked the end of this important phase. However, in 1574, another fire destroyed some of the second floor rooms, fortunately without undermining the structure. Works began immediately to replace the wood furnishings and decorations of these rooms.

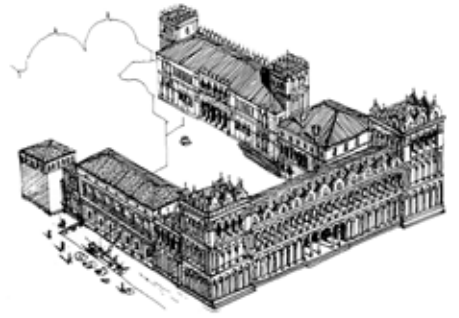


Illustration of Palazzo Ducale - 12th Century

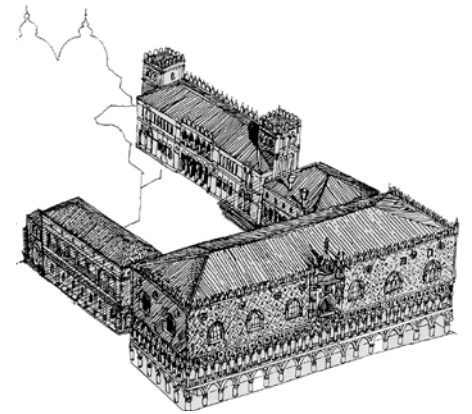


Illustration of Palazzo Ducale - 14th Century

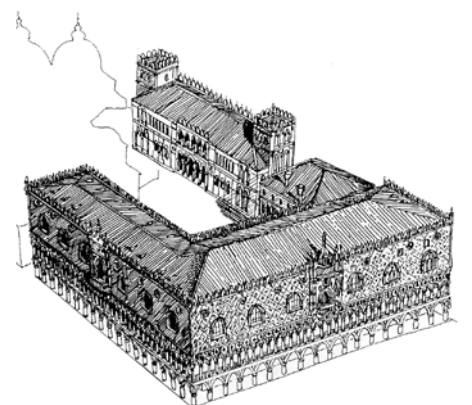


Illustration of Palazzo Ducale - 15th Century

In 1577, when works had just been finished, another huge fire damaged the Sala dello Scrutinio and the Great Council Chamber, destroying masterpieces by artists such as Gentile da Fabriano, Pisanello, Alvise Vivarini, Carpaccio, Bellini, Pordenone and Titian. Reconstruction works were rapidly undertaken to restore it to its original appearance, completed by 1579-80.

The prisons and other 17th century works

Until then, Palazzo Ducale housed not only the Doge's apartments, the seat of the government and the city's courtrooms, but also a jail. It was only in the second half of the 16th century that Antonio da Ponte ordered the construction of new prisons, built by Antonio Contin around 1600, which were linked to the Doge's Palace by the Bridge of Sighs. This transfer of the prisons left the old space on the ground floor of the palace free, and at the beginning of the 17th century works began to restructure the courtyard. A colonnade was created in the wing that houses the courtrooms similar to that of the Renaissance façade, while on the inner side a marble façade was constructed alongside the Foscari Arch, decorated with blind arches and surmounted by a clock (1615), a design by Bartolomeo Manopola.

The palace after the fall of the Venetian Republic

Palazzo Ducale was the heart of the political life and public administration of the Venetian Republic. Therefore, when the Republic fell in 1797, its role inevitably changed. Venice was firstly subjected to French rule, then to Austrian, and ultimately,

in 1866, it became part of a united Italy. Over this period, the Palazzo Ducale was occupied by various administrative offices and housed important cultural institutions such as the Biblioteca Marciana (from 1811 to 1904). By the end of the 19th century, the structure was showing signs of decay and the Italian government set aside significant funds for an extensive restoration. Many original 14th century capitals were removed and substituted and the originals now form the collection in the Museo dell'Opera. All public offices were moved elsewhere, with the exception of the State Office for the Protection of Historical Monuments, which is still housed in the building, but under the current name of Superintendence of the Environmental and Architectural Heritage of Venice and its Lagoon. In 1923, the Italian State, owner of the building, appointed the City Council to manage it as a public museum. In 1996, the Doge's Palace became part of the Civic Museums of Venice network.



Matteo Stom, San Nicola da Tolentino spegne l'incendio del Palazzo Ducale di Venezia



Hogenberg, Franz
L'incendio del Palazzo Ducale di Venezia del 1577
Engraving
Venice, Museo Correr

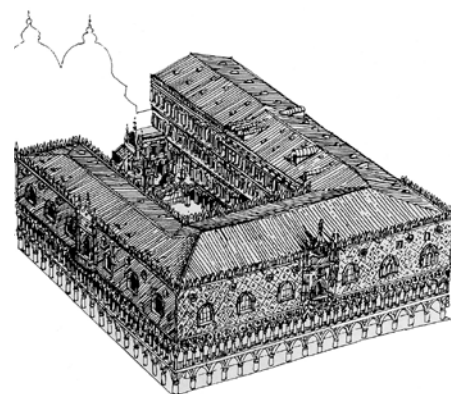


Illustration of Palazzo Ducale - 16th Century

Itineraries

The public entrance to the Doge's Palace in Venice is through the Porta del Frumento, approached through the colonnade under the 14th century waterfront façade. Public services and the **Museo dell'Opera** are located at the ground floor.

The visit to the upper floors starts in the extraordinary **Courtyard**, from where you pass up to the **Loggia** on the second floor with the **Institutional Chambers** (throughout the second and first floors) and then to the **Armoury** and **Prisons**.

Itineraries

- Museo dell'Opera
- The Courtyard and the Loggias
- The Institutional Chambers
- The Armoury
- The Prisons

● The Museo dell'Opera

Over the centuries, the Doge's Palace has been restructured and restored countless times. Due to fires, structural failures and infiltrations on one hand, and new organizational requirements and modifications or complete overhauls of the ornamental trappings on the other, there was hardly a moment in which some kind of works have not been under way at the building. From the Middle Ages the activities of maintenance and conservation were in the hands of a kind of "technical office", which was in charge of all such operations and oversaw the workers and their sites: the Opera, or fabbricera or procuratoria. After the mid-19th century, the Palace seemed to be in such a state of decay that its very survival was in question; thus from 1876 a major restoration plan was launched.

The work involved the two facades and the capitals belonging to the ground-floor arcade and the upper loggia: 42 of these, which appeared to be in a specially dilapidated state, were removed and replaced by copies.

The originals, some of which were masterpieces of Venetian sculpture of the 14th and 15th centuries, were placed, together with other sculptures from the facades, in an area specifically set aside for this purpose: the Museo dell'Opera.

After undergoing thorough and careful restoration works, they are now exhibited, on their original columns, in these 6 rooms of the museum, which are traversed by an ancient wall in great blocks of stone, a remnant of an earlier version of the Palace.

The rooms also contain fragments of statues and important architectural and decorative works in stone from the facades of the Palace.



Museo dell'Opera
Palazzo Ducale, Venice

● The Courtyard and the Loggias

Having entered the palace by the Porta del Frumento, the oldest side of the building, you can see the Piazzetta wing to the left and the Renaissance wing to the right. The north side of the courtyard is closed by the junction between the Palace and St. Mark's Basilica, which used to be the Doge's chapel. At the center of the courtyard stand two well-heads dating from the mid-16th century. Used for formal entrances, the Giants' Staircase is guarded by Sansovino's two colossal statues of Mars and Neptune, which represents Venice's power by land and by sea.

The rounded arch dedicated to Doge Francesco Foscari (1423-1457) alternates bands of Istrian stone and red Verona marble and links the Giants' Staircase to the Porta della Carta through which visitors today leave the palace. Members of the Senate gathered before government meetings in the Senator's Courtyard, to the right of the Giants' Staircase.

At the opposite end of the Renaissance façade, the wide Censors' Staircase leads visitors to the loggia floor above where the tour to the upper floors begins.

The visit itinerary walks you through the Renaissance wing, from the Censors' Staircase to the Gold Staircase, leading you to the upper floors, where various State Government offices were situated. Two plaques here are worthy of note: one, from 1362, has Gothic lettering dating from the papacy of Urban V and promises indulgences to those who give alms to the incarcerated; the other plaque, a work by Alessandro Vittoria which stands by the Giants' Staircase and can be more easily seen at the end of the visit, celebrates French King Henri III's visit to Venice in 1574.

● The Institutional Chambers

Floor 2

The tour through the various **Institutional Chambers** in the Palace begins in the Square Atrium. These were the rooms which housed the organs of a political and judicial administrative which was the envy of Europe for centuries, due not only to its immutability (in spite of the absence of a written constitution) but also to its ability to resist the passage of time and still maintain social peace and harmony.

The Square Atrium

The room served largely as a waiting room, the antechamber to various halls. The decoration dates from the 16th century, during the period of Doge Girolamo Priùli, who appears in Tintoretto's ceiling painting with the symbols of his office, accompanied by allegories of Justice and Peace. The four corner scenes, probably by Tintoretto's workshop, comprise biblical stories – perhaps an allusion to the virtues of the Doge – and allegories of the four seasons. The celebratory decor of the room was completed by four paintings of mythological scenes, which now hang in the antechamber to the Hall of the Full Council. Their place here has been taken by Girolamo Bassano's *The Angel appearing to the Shepherds* and other biblical scenes that are, with reservations, attributed to Veronese.

The Four Doors Room

This room was the formal antechamber to the more important rooms in the palace, and the doors which give it its name are ornately framed in precious eastern marbles; each is surmounted by an allegorical sculptural group that refers to the virtues which should inspire those who took on the government responsibilities.



Courtyard
Palazzo Ducale, Venice



Gold Staircase
Palazzo Ducale, Venice



The Square Atrium
Palazzo Ducale, Venice

The 1574 fire in this area damaged this room and those immediately after severely, but fortunately with no structural damage. The present decor is a work by Antonio da Ponte and design by Andrea Palladio and Antonio Rusconi. The coffered ceiling – with stucco decoration by Giovanni Cambi, known as Bombarda – contains frescoes of mythological subjects and of the cities and regions under Venetian dominion. Painted by Jacopo Tintoretto from 1578 onwards, this decorative scheme was designed to show a close link between Venice's foundation, its independence, and the historical mission of the Venetian aristocracy – a program of self-celebration that could already be seen in the Golden Staircase. Amongst the paintings on the walls, one that stands out is Titian's portrait of Doge Antonio Grimani (1521-1523) kneeling before Faith. On the easel stands a famous work by Tiepolo; painted between 1756 and 1758, it shows Venice receiving the gifts of the sea from Neptune.

Antechamber to the Hall of the Full Council

Formal antechamber where foreign ambassadors and delegations waited to be received by the Full Council, which was delegated by the Senate to deal with foreign affairs. This room was restored after the 1574 fire and so was its decor, with stucco-works and ceiling frescoes, similar to what one finds in the Hall of Four Doors. The central fresco by Veronese shows Venice distributing honors and rewards. The top of the walls is decorated with a fine frieze and other sumptuous fittings, including the fireplace between the windows and the fine doorway leading into the Hall of the Full Council, whose Corinthian columns bear a pediment surmounted by a marble sculpture showing the female figure of Venice resting on a lion and accompanied by allegories of Glory and Concord. Next to the doorways are four canvases that Jacopo Tintoretto painted for the

Square Atrium, but which were brought here in 1716 to replace the original leather wall paneling. Each of the mythological scenes depicted is also an allegory of the Republic's government. The Antechamber contains other famous works, including Paolo Veronese's *The Rape of Europe*.

The Council Chamber

The Full Council which met in this room was comprised of two separate and independent organs of power, the Savi and the Signoria. The former was in its turn divided into the Savi del Consiglio, who concerned themselves mainly with foreign policy, the Savi di Terraferma, who were responsible for matters linked with Venice's empire in mainland Italy; and the Savi agli Ordini, who dealt with maritime issues. The Signoria was made up of the three Heads of the Councils of Forty and members of the Minor Council, composed of the Doge and six councilors, one for each district into which the city of Venice is divided.

The Full Council was mainly responsible for organizing and coordinating the work of the Senate, reading dispatches from ambassadors and city governors, receiving foreign delegations and promoting other political and legislative activity. Alongside these shared functions, each body had their own particular mandates, which made this body a sort of "guiding intelligence" behind the work of the Senate, especially in foreign affairs. The decor was designed by Andrea Palladio to replace that destroyed in the 1574 fire; the wood paneling of the walls and end tribune and the carved ceiling are the work of Francesco Bello and Andrea da Faenza. The splendid paintings set into that ceiling were commissioned from Veronese, who completed them between 1575 and 1578. This ceiling is one of the artist's masterpieces and celebrates the Good Government of the Republic, together with the Faith on which it rests and the Virtues that guide and



The Four Doors Room
Palazzo Ducale, Venice



Antechamber to the Hall of the Full Council
Palazzo Ducale, Venice



Paolo Veronese, *The Rape of Europe*
Antechamber to the Hall of the Full Council
Palazzo Ducale, Venice



The Council Chamber
Palazzo Ducale, Venice

strengthen it. The first rectangular panel shows the St. Mark's bell-tower behind the figures of Mars and Neptune, Lords of War and Sea respectively. The central panel shows the *Triumph of Faith*, and the rectangular panel closest to the tribune, *Venice with Justice and Peace*. Around there are some eight smaller, T- or L-shaped panels that depict the virtues of government. Veronese again produces the large canvas over the tribune in celebration of the Christian fleet's victory over the Turks at the Battle of Lepanto on 7 October 1571 – a victory to which Venice made an essential contribution. The other paintings are by Tintoretto and show various Doges with the Christ, the Virgin and saints.

Senate Chamber

This hall was also known as the Sala dei Pregadi, because the Doge asked the members of the Senate to take part in the meetings held here. The Senate which met in this chamber was one of the oldest public institutions in Venice; it had first been founded in the 13th century and then gradually evolved over time, until by the 16th century it was the body mainly responsible for overseeing political and financial affairs in such areas as manufacturing industries, trade and foreign policy. In effect, it was a more limited sub-committee of the Great Council, and its members were generally drawn from the wealthiest Venetian families. The refurbishment after the 1574 fire took place during the 1580s, and once the new ceiling had been completed work started on the pictorial decoration, which seems to have been finished by 1595. In the works produced for this room by Tintoretto, Christ is clearly the predominant figure; perhaps this is a reference to the Senate 'conclave' which elected the Doge, who was then seen as being under the protection of the Son of God. The room also contains four paintings by Jacopo Palma il Giovane, which are linked with specific events of the Venetian history.

The Chamber of the Council of Ten

The Council of Ten was set up after a conspiracy in 1310, when Bajamonte Tiepolo and other noblemen tried to overthrow the institutions of the State. Initially meant as a provisional body to try those conspirators, it's one of those many examples of Venetian institutions that were intended to be temporary but ended up becoming permanent. Its authority covered all sectors of public life and this power gave rise to the fame of the Council as a ruthless, all-seeing tribunal at the service of the ruling oligarchy, a court whose sentences were handed down rapidly after hearings held in secret. The assembly was made up of ten members chosen from the Senate and elected by the Great Council. These ten sat in council with the Doge and his six counselors, which accounts for the 17 semicircular outlines that one can still see in the chamber. The decoration of the ceiling was the work of Gian Battista Ponchino, with the assistance of a young Veronese and Gian Battista Zelotti. Carved and gilded, the ceiling is divided into 25 compartments decorated with images of divinities and allegories intended to illustrate the power of the Council of Ten that was responsible for punishing the guilty and freeing the innocent. Veronese's paintings – from that of the *Old oriental figure* to that showing *Juno scattering her gifts on Venice* – are particularly famous. The oval painting in the center, depicting Jove descending from the clouds to hurl thunderbolts at Vice, is however a copy of the original Veronese which Napoleon took to the Louvre.

The Compass Room

This is the first room on this floor dedicated to the administration of justice; its name comes from the large wooden compass surmounted by a statue of Justice, which stands in one corner and hides the entrance to the rooms of the three Heads of the Council



Senate Chamber
Palazzo Ducale, Venice



The Chamber of the Council of Ten
Palazzo Ducale, Venice



Paolo Veronese, *Juno scattering her gifts on Venice*
The Chamber of the Council of Ten
Palazzo Ducale, Venice

of Ten and the State Inquisitors. This room, therefore, was the antechamber where those who had been summoned by these powerful magistrates waited to be called and the magnificent decor was intended to underline the solemnity of the Republic's legal machinery, some of the most famous and efficient components of which were housed in these rooms. The decor dates from the 16th century, and once again it was Veronese who was commissioned to decorate the ceiling. Completed in 1554, the works he produced are all intended to exalt the "good government" of the Venetian Republic; the central panel, with St. Mark descending to crown the three Theological Virtues, is a copy of the original, now in the Louvre. Sansovino designed the large fireplace in 1553-54. Within the palace, all rooms that served in the exercise of justice were linked vertically. From the ground-floor prisons known as The Wells, to the Advocate's Offices on the loggia floor, the Councils of Forty and the Hall of the Magistrates of Law on the first floor and the various courtrooms on this second floor, the progression culminated in the prisons directly under the roof, the famous Piombi or "Leads". Stairways, corridors and vestibules interconnected all of these spaces.

From this room one proceeds to the Armoury

● The Armoury

Since earliest times the palace was equipped with a deposit of weapons and armed garrisons to protect the government activities taking place within. This "deposit" has been located in the area in which we now find ourselves since the fourteenth century. During this period, the responsibility and the care of the armoury was entrusted to the Council of Ten, whose acronym, CX, appears engraved on many weapons and on the door jambs.

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The first nucleus of weapons preserved here consisted of ready-to-use tools, chosen on the basis of efficiency and practicality and constantly updated in line with the technical progress of the sector. Over time, this nucleus was joined by weapons for parades or events and weapons that were gifts or exchanges on official occasions. In the latter case, the weapons are precious objects in which the aesthetic value often prevails over their function. Finally, the armoury also preserves arms, banners and other artefacts that have ended here because they were won as war booty or because they have been seized for various reasons. The collection used to be vast and impressive, but after the fall of the Republic in 1797, it suffered large-scale looting. Today the collection comprises more than 2000 pieces: steel weapons and firearms, weapons for defence and combat, as well as various items for parade, armour and accessories. It is still a very important historical collection, with pieces of enormous value, and one that is closely linked to the Republic of Venice and is thus highly representative of its thousand-year history.

From this room, one can go down the Censors' Staircase to pass into the rooms housing the councils of justice on the first floor.

● The Institutional Chambers

Floor 1

Liagò

In Venetian dialect liagò means a terrace or balcony enclosed by glass. This particular example was a sort of corridor and meeting-place for patrician members of the Great Council in the intervals between their discussions of government business. The ceiling of painted and gilded beams dates



Armoury
Palazzo Ducale, Venice



Liagò
Palazzo Ducale, Venice

from mid 16th century, while the paintings on the walls are from the 17th and 18th century.

The Chamber of Quarantia Civil Vecchia

The Council of Forty (Quarantia) seems to have been set up by the Great Council at the end of the 12th century and was the highest appeal court in the Republic. Originally a single forty-man council which wielded substantial political and legislative power, the Quarantia was during the course of the 15th century divided into 3 separate Councils: the Quarantia Criminal (for sentences in what we would call criminal law); the Quarantia Civil Vecchia (for civil actions within Venice) and the Quarantia Civil Nuovo (for civil actions within the Republic's mainland territories). This room was restored in the 17th century; the fresco fragment to the right of the entrance is the only remnant of the original decor. The paintings hanging here date from the 17th century as well.

The Guariento Room

The first name is due to the fact that this room was once linked to the Armory by a staircase, and the second name to the fact that it now houses a fresco painted for the Hall of the Great Council by the Paduan artist Guariento around 1365. Almost completely destroyed in the 1577 fire, the remains of that fresco were, in 1903, rediscovered under the large canvas *Il Paradiso* which Tintoretto was commissioned to paint for the same wall. Guariento's fresco, too, depicts Paradise. In the center there is an enthroned Virgin being crowned by Christ, while, to far left and right, are aedicule like those from a portico church façade, under which one can see the figures of the Annunciation: the Angel Gabriel on the left, and the Virgin Mary on the right. Angels playing musical instruments surround the central figures and the Evangelists are shown before the throne; saints, prophets and martyrs are depicted alongside in individual stalls with gothic tracery.

The heat of the fire reduced the surviving fragments to a near monochrome, while in places where the plaster has fallen, one can see the red traces of the preliminary drawing. What we have now gives a scarcely adequate idea of what must have been a sumptuous work, glittering with color and gilding.

The Chamber of the Great Council

Restructured in the 14th century, the Chamber was decorated with a fresco by Guariento and later with works by the most famous artists of the period, including Gentile da Fabriano, Pisanello, Alvisse Vivarini, Carpaccio, Bellini, Pordenone and Titian. 53 meters long and 25 meters wide, this is not only the largest and most majestic chamber in the Doge's Palace, but also one of the largest rooms in Europe. Here, meetings of the Great Council were held, the most important political body in the Republic. A very ancient institution, this Council was made up of all the male members of patrician Venetian families over 25 years old, irrespective of their individual status, merits or wealth. This was why, in spite of the restrictions in its powers that the Senate introduced over the centuries, the Great Council continued to be seen as bastion of republican equality. The Council had the right to call to account all the other authorities and bodies of the State when it seemed that their powers were getting excessive and needed to be trimmed. The 1,200 to 2,000 noblemen who sat in the Council always considered themselves guardians of the laws that were the basis of all the other authorities within the State. This room also housed the first phases in the election of a new Doge, which in the later stages would pass into the Sala dello Scrutinio. These voting procedures were extremely long and complex in order to frustrate any attempts of cheating.



The Guariento Room
Palazzo Ducale, Venice



The Chamber of the Great Council
Palazzo Ducale, Venice

Every Sunday, when the bells of St. Mark's rang, the Council members would gather in the hall with the Doge presiding at the center of the podium and his counselors occupying double rows of seats that ran the entire length of the room. Soon after work on the new hall had been completed, the 1577 fire damaged not only this Chamber but also the Sala dello Scrutinio. The structural damage was soon restored, respecting the original layout, and all works were finished within few years, ending in 1579-80. The decoration of the restored structure involved artists such as Veronese, Jacopo and Domenico Tintoretto, and Palma il Giovane. The walls were decorated with episodes of the Venetian history, with particular reference to the city's relations with the papacy and the Holy Roman Empire, while the ceiling was decorated with the Virtues and individual examples of Venetian heroism, and a central panel containing an allegorical glorification of the Republic. Facing each other in groups of six, the twelve wall paintings depict acts of valor or incidents of war that had occurred during the city's history. Immediately below the ceiling runs a frieze with portraits of the first 76 doges (the portraits of the others are to be found in the Sala dello Scrutinio); commissioned from Jacopo Tintoretto, most of these paintings are in fact the work of his son, Domenico. Each Doge holds a scroll bearing a reference to his most important achievements, while Doge Marin Faliero, who attempted a coup d'état in 1355, is represented simply by a black cloth (a traitor to the Republic, he was not only condemned to death but also to damnatio memoriae, the total eradication of his memory and name). One of the long walls, behind the Doge's throne, is occupied by the longest canvas painting in the world, *the Paradiso*, which Jacopo Tintoretto and workshop produced between 1588 and 1592 to replace the Guariento fresco that had been damaged in the fire.

The Chamber of the Scrutinio

This immense room is in the wing of the Doge's Palace built between the 1520s and 1540s during the dogate of Francesco Foscari (1423-57). It was initially intended to house the precious manuscripts left to the Republic by Petrarch and Bessarione (1468); indeed, it was originally known as the Library. In 1532, it was decided that the Chamber should also hold the electoral counting and/or deliberations that assiduously marked the rhythm of Venetian politics, based on an assembly system whose epicenter was the nearby Great Council Chamber. After the construction of Sansovino's Library though, this room was used solely for elections, starting with the most important, that of the Doge.

The present decorations date from between 1578 and 1615, after the 1577 fire. The rich ceiling was designed by the painter-cartographer Cristoforo Sorte. Episodes of military history in the various compartments glorify the exploits of the Venetians, with particular emphasis on the conquest of the maritime empire; the only exception being the last oval, recording the taking of Padua in 1405. The walls recount battles won between 809 and 1656. The painting on the eastern side showing *The Battle of Lepanto* by Andrea Vicentino, of 1571, is particularly evocative. It is framed by other battle scenes: *the Venetian Victory over the Turks at the Dardanelles* by Pietro Liberi, painted between 1660 and 1665, and *the Venetian Victory over the Turks in Albania* by Pietro Bellotti, of 1663.

The western wall also retells military stories, including *The Conquest of Tyre* by Antonio Aliense, of 1590 ca. and *the Venetian Naval Victory over the Egyptians at Jaffa*, by Sante Peranda, painted between 1598 and 1605.

The room also contains three important works of sculpture: Adam, Eve and The Shield-Bearer.



The Chamber of the Great Council
Palazzo Ducale, Venice



Jacopo and Domenico Tintoretto
The Paradiso
The Chamber of the Great Council
Palazzo Ducale, Venice



The Chamber of the Scrutinio
Palazzo Ducale, Venice



Andrea Vicentino,
The Battle of Lepanto, 1571
The Chamber of the Scrutinio
Palazzo Ducale, Venice

These are the originals sculpted between 1462 and 1471 by Antonio Rizzo to adorn the façades of the Foscari Gateway in the courtyard of the palace.

The Chamber of Quarantia Criminal or the Cuoi room

Housing one of the three Councils of Forty, the highest appeal courts in the Venetian Republic, this is another room used in the administration of justice. The Quarantia Criminal was set up in the 15th century and, as the name suggests, dealt with cases of criminal law. It was a very important body as its members, who were part of the Senate as well, also had legislative powers. The wooden stalls date from the 17th century. The room beyond this served as an archive, and was presumably lined with shelves and cupboards.

The Chamber of the Magistrato alle Leggi

This chamber housed the Magistratura dei Conservatori ed esecutori delle leggi e ordini degli uffici di San Marco e di Rialto. Created in 1553, this authority was headed by 3 of the city's patricians and was responsible for making sure the regulations concerning the practice of law were observed. In a mercantile city such as Venice, the courts were of enormous importance. And the administration of justice in the city was made all the more special by the fact that it was not based on Imperial, Common or Roman law but on a legal system that was peculiar to Venice.

From this room one proceeds to the Prisons

● The Prisons

The Bridge of Sighs

This corridor leads over the Bridge of Sighs, built in 1614 to link the Doge's Palace to the structure intended to house the New Prisons.

Enclosed and covered on all sides, the bridge contains two separate corridors that run next to each other. That which visitors use today linked the Prisons to the chambers of the Magistrato alle Leggi e la Quarantia Criminal; the other linked the prisons to the State Advocacy rooms and the Parlatorio. Both corridors are linked to the service staircase that leads from the ground floor cells of the Pozzi to the roof cells of the Piombi. The famous name of the bridge dates from the Romantic period and was supposed to refer to the sighs of prisoners who, passing from the courtroom to the cell in which they would serve their sentence, took a last look at freedom as they glimpsed the lagoon and San Giorgio through the small windows.

The New Prisons

Seat of all government and judiciary functions within the Republic, the Doge's Palace also housed prisons. In the mid-16th century it was decided to build a new structure on the other side of the canal to the side of the palace which would house prisons and the chambers of the magistrates known as the Notte al Criminal. Ultimately linked to the palace by the Bridge of Sighs, the building was intended to improve the conditions for prisoners with larger and more light-filled and airy cells. However, certain sections of the new prisons fall short of this aim, particularly those laid out with passageways on all sides and those cells which give onto the inner courtyard of the building. In keeping with previous traditions, each cell was lined with overlapping planks of larch that were nailed in place.

From this room one proceeds to the Chamber of Censors



*Works of sculpture by Antonio Rizzo
The Chamber of the Scrutinio
Palazzo Ducale, Venice*



*The Chamber of Quarantia Criminal
Palazzo Ducale, Venice*



*The Bridge of Sighs
Palazzo Ducale, Venice*



*The New Prisons
Palazzo Ducale, Venice*

● The Institutional Chambers

The Loggia floor

The Chamber of Censors

The State Censors were set up in 1517 by Marco Giovanni di Giovanni, a cousin of Doge Andrea Gritti (1523-1538) and nephew of the great Francesco Foscari.

The title and duties of the Censors resulted from the cultural and political upheavals that are associated with Humanism. In fact, the Censors were not judges as such, but more like moral consultants, being their main task the repression of electoral fraud and the protection of the State's public institutions.

On the walls hang a number of Domenico Tintoretto's portraits of these magistrates, and below the armorial bearings of some of those who held the position.

The Chamber of the State Advocacies

This particular State Advocacy department dates from the time when Venice was a commune (12th century). The 3 members, the Avogadori, were the figures who safeguarded the very principle of legality, making sure that the laws were applied correctly.

Though they never enjoyed the status and power of the Doge and the Council of Ten, the Avogadori remained one of the most prestigious authorities in Venice right up to the fall of the Republic. They were also responsible for preserving the integrity of the city's patrician class, verifying the legitimacy of marriages and births inscribed in the Golden Book. The room is decorated with paintings representing some of the Avogadori venerating the Virgin, the Christ and various saints.

The "Scrigno" Room

The Venetian nobility as a caste came into existence because of the "closure" of admissions to the Great Council in 1297;

however, it was only in the 16th century that formal measures were taken to introduce restrictions that protected the status of that aristocracy: marriages between nobles and commoners were forbidden and greater controls were set up to check the validity of aristocratic titles.

There was also a Silver Book, which registered all those families that not only had the requisites of "civilization" and "honor", but could also show that they were of ancient Venetian origin; such families furnished the manpower for the State bureaucracy – and particularly, the chancellery within the Doge's Palace itself. The Golden and Silver Books were kept in a chest in this room, inside a cupboard that also contained all the documents proving the legitimacy of claims to be inscribed therein. The cupboard which one sees here nowadays extends around three sides of a wall niche; lacquered in white with gilded decorations, it dates from the 18th century.

The Chamber of the Navy Captains

Made up of 20 members from the Senate and the Great Council, the Milizia da Mar, first set up in the mid 16th century, was responsible for recruiting crews necessary for Venice's war galleys. Contrary to what one might expect, the bulk of these crews were made up of paid oarsman drawn from the Venetian manufacturing industries. Another similar body, entitled the Provveditori all'Armar, was responsible for the actual fitting and supplying of the fleet. The furnishings are from the 16th century, while the wall torches date from the 18th century.

The next room, now the bookshop, used to house the Lower Chancellery of Palazzo Ducale.



*The Chamber of Censors
Palazzo Ducale, Venice*



*The Chamber of the State Advocacies
Palazzo Ducale, Venice*



*The Chamber of the Navy Captains
Palazzo Ducale, Venice*

General Information

Venue

Palazzo Ducale

San Marco, Venice

How to get there

Vaporetto

Line 1 Vallarosso or San Zaccaria stop

Line 2 Giardinetti stop

Line 5.1 / 5.2 / 4.1 San Zaccaria stop

Opening Hours and Tickets

For ticket information and opening hours please consult the website:

www.palazzoducale.visitmuve.it

Bookings

- on-line: www.palazzoducale.visitmuve.it

- calling the call center: **848082000** (from Italy);

+39 041 42730892 (only from abroad)

from Monday to Friday, excluding holidays, from 09:00 to 13:00

The booking office will also reply to customers through the e-mail address prenotazionivenezia@coopculture.it

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Palazzo Ducale, Venice



Vittore Carpaccio, *The Lion of Saint Mark*
Palazzo Ducale, Venice



Paolo Veronese, *Dialectic or Industry*
Palazzo Ducale, Venice

