

Bologna & Venice Itinerary

February 25-27

I had never been to **Mardi Gras** or any **Carnival** celebration in any country, so I decided a while back that this year I would make a point of experiencing **Carnival in Venice**. It was much **cheaper to fly into Bologna**, and as I had never been to Bologna but was not so inclined to make a special trip, it made for a good combination of cities. We didn't have to rent a car, which saved on hassle and expense. We did have to take a half-vacation day on Friday, because of flight times and leaving from Beauvais, but at least that allowed us to arrive in Bologna at a reasonable hour and enjoy a nice dinner.

The verdict? It was a great weekend and I'm very glad I experienced Carnival in Venice once. But I think **once was enough**. Once in Venice and maybe once anywhere. We went expecting **crowds**, and there were certainly crowds. All the people (many of whom wore **Carnival masks** in the streets day and night) made for a **festive atmosphere**, but Venice's **narrow streets** and only one main route through town rendered it rather impossible to get away from the crowds. In better weather we certainly would have spent more time having a drink or a coffee on a terrace, doing a bit of people-watching, but it was a cold weekend. My biggest complaint though—there's just no decent and central yet cheap place to stay in Venice—please let me know if you find otherwise! The weekend ended up being rather pricey.

| Date | To | Flight/Hotel/Car Details | Cost | Comments |
|-------------|---------|---|---|---|
| Fri, Feb 25 | Bologna | <p><i>Ryanair Flight</i> FR4304 Depart BVA at 17:40 and arrive BLQ at 19:20</p> <p><i>Hotel:</i> Best Western Hotel San Donato: http://www.hotelsandonato.it/en/home-page.aspx</p> <p>I would definitely stay at the Best Western again. The rooms were nothing special but the hotel is in a great location and offers free breakfast.</p> | <p>€68 each (flight)</p> <p>€94 total (hotel)</p> | <p>Can cancel hotel before midnight Feb 21</p> <p>We had dinner at Antico Ristorante Benso (Vicolo San Giobbe, 3/D, Tel. 051.223904, www.anticobenso.com), which I would highly recommend for pasta, seafood or meat dishes. It was full, seemed to be quite popular with locals. Prices were refreshing, coming from Paris.</p> <p>We walked around in central Bologna at night—the monuments and buildings are lit up beautifully and there's a fairly lively night life.</p> |
| Sat, Feb 26 | Venice | <p><i>Train</i> Bologna-Venice 10h10-11h21 + 7</p> <p><i>Hotel:</i> Palazzo Selvadego: http://www.hotelmonaco.it/customers/hotelmonaco/webhm.nsf/webpages/salvadego_palace_venice_hotel.htm</p> <p>The hotel was right near Piazza San Marco (just past it, if you're coming from the train station or the Rialto Bridge), which is what we were looking for, but I now realize that it would have been easier (and probably cheaper) to stay part-way between the train station and San Marco, perhaps closer to the Rialto. That way we could have avoided lugging the suitcases so far (or we could have taken a water taxi or smarter yet—brought backpacks, not suitcases!) and we would in fact have been more central for all the walking around we wanted to do. It was a pain with all the crowds to get by San Marco's every time we wanted to leave or come back to the hotel.</p> | <p>€28 each (train)</p> <p>€15 total (hotel)</p> | <p>Can cancel hotel before noon Feb 24</p> <p>Our hotel was the annex of the Hotel Monaco, one of the "Leading Hotels of the World". They let us riff-raff eat breakfast (it's included—though what's included is just a hot drink and bakery goods) at the Hotel Monaco along with the rich people. Our room was wonderful—spacious, nicely decorated, a huge bathroom with an amazing shower. They did a good job at noise-proofing the windows although I was still woken up by drunken singing people a few times during the night—but that's what I get for visiting during Carnival!</p> |
| Sun, Feb 27 | -- | <p><i>Train</i> Venice-Bologna From Mestre: 14h39-15h50 so leaves Santa Lucia around 14h32</p> <p><i>Ryanair Flight</i> FR4303 Depart BLQ at 20:10 and arrive BVA at 21:50</p> | <p>€28 each (train)</p> | <p>Beauvais airport is farther than CDG or Orly (70 minutes, more with traffic from Porte Maillot) but it's convenient if you have a bit more time. Buses leave from and return to Porte Maillot and are coordinated with the flights so it's never too early or late go to or come back from the airport. It's a small airport, so it's also less hassle than the other airports once you arrive.</p> |