

First-timer's Venice

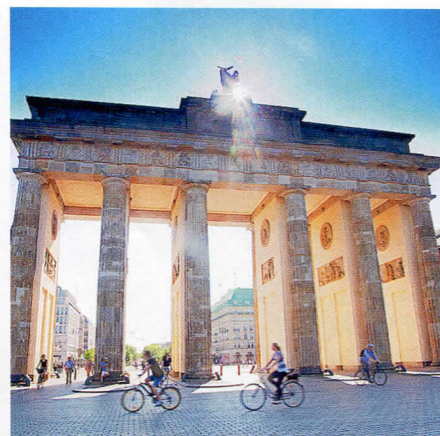
Rowing lessons, lagoon views and food for the mind and body

Fri **There's only one way to arrive in Venice** and that's by boat. Take the Alilaguna vaporetto (alilaguna.it; from £11 one way) from the airport for a magnificent view of the lagoon's mirror-smooth waters against the skyline of Venice's domes and towers. Hop out at San Marco and rest your four-poster at Hotel Savoia & Jolanda, Grand Canal diva. Citalia (01293 731753, citalia.com) has two nights there from £299pp, full board, with flights. With a matchless view of St Mark's Square, Ristorante Quadri is a snooty-luxy, Michelin-starred restaurant (00 39 041 522 2105, alajmo.it; mains about £50). That means 'raw Piedmontese beef with truffle sauce, anchovies, sea urchin and white truffle'.

Sat **Venice's food souk, the Rialto Market**, is a riot of glowing fruit, veg, still-squirming fish and eagle-eyed housewives. Start here, then view Venetian art's big hitters — Bellini, Giorgione, Titian — at the Galleria dell'Accademia (galleriaaccademia.org; £7). The must-see is Giorgione's breast-feeding mum in *The Tempest* — unlike

anything else of its era. A plate of spaghetti *al nero di seppia* (with black cuttlefish ink) is a rite of passage for Venetian first-timers. Try at 'too old and cool to have a website' Osteria Ai Promessi Sposi (00 39 041 241 2747; mains about £12).

Sun **Venetians do it standing up** — that's rowing, obviously. Now you can learn, too, thanks to the teachers at Row Venice (rowvenice.org; from £63). As you glide down hidden backwaters, you're as close as you can be to the city's living heart. A seafood lunch at Al Gatto Nero (00 39 041 730120, gattoneiro.com; mains about £17), on pastel-pretty Burano island, should major on the fresh catch of the day, bookended by raw fish *antipasti* and a Marsala-mighty *tiramisu*. Your last sunset should see a spritz in your hand and the Grand Canal in your eye. So make sure it's at La Naranzeria (lanaranzeria.it), a warehouse-turned-wine bar tucked under the Rialto. **Get there** Fly to Venice from Luton, Southend, Gatwick and Manchester with EasyJet (easyjet.com); fares from £35 one way. *Rachel Spence*



First-timer's Berlin

Living history, flea-market bargains and a touch of the burlesque

Fri **For a novice, Mitte is the most convenient district** and Tegel the easiest airport to get to and from. Berlin is inexpensive, a taxi will only cost £20 to the five-star Ritz-Carlton (00 49 30 33 7777, ritzcarlton.com/berlin; doubles from £156, B&B), on Potsdamer Platz — itself a glass-and-neon monument to modern Berlin. For dinner, pop next door to Essenza (00 49 30 2579 6856, ristorante-essenza.de; mains about £15) for ravioli with truffle from its Euro menu.

Sat **Walk a few blocks east to Kochstrasse** to see a chunk of the original Berlin Wall and marvel at the ingenious escapes from the East at the Checkpoint Charlie Museum (mauermuseum.de; £10). For lunch, try the oriental fusion of Tim Raue's Michelin-starred restaurant nearby (00 49 30 2593 7930, tim-raue.com; three courses £30). Then head to the evocative Holocaust memorial and stroll through the greenery of Tiergarten to the Brandenburg Gate and Reichstag. To taste the nightlife, hit Kreuzberg: strut into Bar Marques (Graefestr. 92) for tapas and cocktails, burlesque Prinzipal (Oranienstr. 178) for 'A Date with Dita' (bourbon and grapefruit), and end at Watergate Club, a dance den with attractive views over the river Spree (Falckensteinstr. 49).

Sun **Nurse your hangover in the park at the former Tempelhof airport**, an iconic Nazi structure, then go shopping in the Hauptbahnhof or bag a bargain in the Mauerpark flea market. More culture? Aim for Museum Island with its five museums — note that the Pergamon altar, one of the main attractions, is under restoration until 2019. **Get there** Fly to Berlin from Manchester, Heathrow and Birmingham with Germanwings (germanwings.com); fares from £79 return. *John Malathronas* >

