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How to do... Venice on the cheap

After checking in to the city's slickest new hostel, Becky Barnicoat finds low-cost ways to eat, drink and see the sights while. far right, Paul Miles enjoys a quieter night. with equally amazing views

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he last time I stayed in a bostel, a steaming drunk, muscle-bound Californian clambered in to my bunk, before wrestled him out. The floors were wet and sticky, and coated in tangles of matted hair. The showers had no doors, just stained curtains on rusty hooks. Privacy was the inside of your

sleeping bag, So I wasn't exactly looking forward to my stay at the brand new Generator hostel in Venice, I needn't have worried. Like an artisanal burger or a craft ale, the hostel is a basic slickly reimagined for the 21st century - a hostel fit for a new generation of travellers who've grown up on, well, artisanal burgers and craft ales.

We approached by boat, in the dead of night. The hostel sits on the shore of Giudecca island, facing the city, and is connected to Saint Mark's Square by a 24-hour vaporetto (waterbus) service. The pretty red brick building.

built in the 19th century as a grain warehouse, has recently been made over by the people behind hotel and over by the people beamin notes and members' club Sohe House. There are two private doubles and dorms for up to 10, with prices starting at a distinctly un-Venetian £15 a night.

As our boat pulled in we could see coloured lights twinkling in the

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windows. The ground-floor lourge and bar area is a vision of hipsterdom; all exposed brickwork, barroque sofas and bearded hinks tapping away at their MacBook Pros. Gorgeous people sippe Aperol spritzes at the bar; a DJ was spinning smooth grooves. Venice is notorious for its

unexciting nightlife - most locals don't live in the historic centre of the city, and the bars tend to close early. So the opening of Generator is a welcome addition to the city's

dorm upstains proper duvets and pillowcases, a lovely big sink area, and - ooh! - a very sexy double showe with glass walls and door. If you were staying here as a group of four, you'd need to be pretty close friends or things could get awkwarf. things could get awkward.

The next morning we awoke to the best surprise yet: the view from our dorm window of Venice unfolding before us, sparkling like sugar in the morning sun. It was all so pretty it didn't seem real. Then suddenly the ai

People sat in groups on the waterfront. chatting as Venice glittered in the distance

Bars and bargains Venice for the thrifty

Snack ... all the time

If you're happy to swap a sit-down meal n a restaurant for a stand-up snack, you can save a fortune - as well as etting a chance to rub shoulders with the locals. A proper Italian breakfast is cheap and fast - coffee and a pastry mocked back standing at the counter of a pasticceria. Da Bonifacio (Castello 4237, Calle degli Albanesi) is moments away from the tourist heave of the San Marco ferry terminal, hidden down a crooked passage to the left of the Danieli Hotel. Order an espresso and weet, comforting tortino di riso, a stry filled with rice pudding.

At lunchtime seek out one of the many bacari that pepper the city. These are small bars that serve ciccheti (tapas-like snacks for €1-€2). As well as peing a fantastic way to fill up cheaply, hey're usually full of locals: stylish, oud, downing prosecco and *crostini* topped with paper-thin prosciutto or creamed salt cod. You can find a bacaro on most corners, but we loved All'Arco on Calle Arco, which is full of old men and ladies with tiny dogs, and Alla Vedova on Ca D'Oro, where we tucked into delicious polpette (meatballs) and tiny glasses of vino bianco.

Join the traders

Venice's most important food market, the Mercato del Rialto, is at its most bustling early on Friday and Saturday when locals and chefs are loading up with ingredients for the weeks with ingredients for the weekend, Wander among stalls piled with bundles of bright, shiny chillies, awordfish and glistening, inky-black squid, Shop for proscictito, cheese, bread and fruit for a picnic or pop in to one of the traders! bars, such as Al Mercá, (21) San Polo, Fondamenta Riva Olio) for an Ham bruschetta and glass of prosecco. It's how the traders like to roll,

Take the bus

To appreciate the impossible dreamlike beauty of Venice, you have to get out on the water. Private water taxis cost over £100 but the more affordable

high jinks. Out on the waterfront, people sat in groups chatting and unoking, watching Venice glittering in the distance.

was filled with the deep, long bellow of

a ship's horn, and Venice was blotted out by a 500-metre cruise liner, gliding across our field of vision like the

spaceship in Independence Day, That night, the hostel was back in full swing with a mix of travellers

and locale getting leathered at the and locale getting leathered at the glitzy bar. Having spent eight hours tramping around the city, we didn't feel sparkling enough to join them, so headed to our dorm for an early night. Apparently we were the only

As we lay awake, coming to terms with the realisation that Generator probably wasn't the place for a night in, we wondered if it was our fault o theirs, Probably ours. Being too cool and fun isn't a very serious charge to hold against a place.

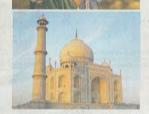
• Accommodation was provided by

Generator Hostels (+39 041 877 8288, venice. Dorm beds €17,05pp, rooms



We also discovered Car drink. We settled down work of cured meat and glasse n Osteria alla Rifora (Can





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A hostel, but not as we know it ... the Generator's 'lounge area (top) is a vision of



Hit the beach When you're stomping the Venice's hot streets all day,

to jump in to one of the car overwhelming. Do not do t water is stagnant and filthy take the vaporetto to the L hire bikes at Lido On Bike (Santa Maria Elisabetta, 21/1 and head down the island beach, the last one along, I reserve (warning: it also wanaturists), and is the wilde lido with dunes, drift wood of sea birds. Trattoria al Po a rustic restaurant in Malar short walk or bike ride from is a good spot for an afforda

Dining out in Venice is expe it comes as a surprise to dis drinking is cheap, which m why locals can often be spo a glass in hand from 10am. is no more than #2.50 in ar north to Canareggio, a peac district, and do a mini barhighly-rated Caffe Dodo and



Get out of town Your money goes much furt

ou can escape the centre a nto one of the city's resider neighbourhoods - which is without a map; more than a city, there's a surprise on ev

into Santa Croce, a vibrant c Osteria La Zucca (+39 04 152

