

## Jake's Adventures



**Part Five:** A lengthy flight followed by a chilly water-taxi ride to their hotel brings the first leg of Jake's and Patti's vacation to a close. The two are greeted by Marco, the desk clerk, and retire to rest up for this episode's adventures in the streets of ancient Venice.

## Aloha Venezia!

**Help! I'm a prisoner on a Stair Master and I can't get off!**

**By Jake Satin-Jacobs**

We had no idea how much we would need our hearty breakfast as we took off on our first walking tour of Venice. The city is known for its canals. But as you begin walking, you come to know it for its stairstep bridges. By noon on the first day, I had already counted 1,500 steps and decided not to torment myself with continued enumeration.

In addition, the streets, which permit no bicycle, car or other vehicular traffic, are frequently too narrow for two adults to pass without bumping shoulders. Walking becomes a sort of dance. Step, step, side, side, step, shuffle, side, side, step. We danced through the opposing traffic for an hour or so and then it began to rain.

Negotiating the streets of Venice in the rain increases the already formidable challenge.

Imagine that a short, stout, older woman with a small dog is walking toward you in a four-foot wide alleyway. She is carrying an umbrella large enough to shade the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, the pointy edge of which approaches at throat level. The dance steps must be modified drastically and immediately: Tiptoe, reach, side, side, turn, step, step. Eventually, you must learn that dance, as well as the standard umbrella tilt routine.

### **The people, they cannot pass**

After a day of walking the streets, we returned to the Hotel American for what would become our customary, pre-dinner nap. It was, of course, raining when we lay down to rest. And it was raining when we awoke several hours later to prepare for dinner. November may be the cheapest month in Italy, but it is also the wettest.

As Patti began to dress, a siren sounded. It was not the kind of siren you would expect from a police vehicle or an ambulance. It the kind you would expect during an enemy attack or preceding a class six tornado. It aroused my wife's curiosity and she called Marco at the desk. Patti asked about the reason for the sounding of the siren.

Marco, a little out of breath, responded, "The Grand Canal...it overflows."

"And what does this mean to us?" she asked.

"The people...they cannot pass."

Patti had more questions, but Marco seemed preoccupied. He said only, "I must go. The furniture...they are getting wet."

My wife is not the sort of person to let things go without explanation. She made her way down the three floors toward the lobby, where she found the stairwell jammed with guests. The lobby was a foot deep in water and sewage and hotel employees were scurrying about, piling furniture into little towers.

She returned to inform me that we would not be going out to dinner, at least until the water and sewage receded with the lowering tide. Climbing bridges had made me hungry and I was cranky. We ate and drank everything in the mini-bar. Our first Italian dinner consisted of peanuts, beer, wine and Campari.

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