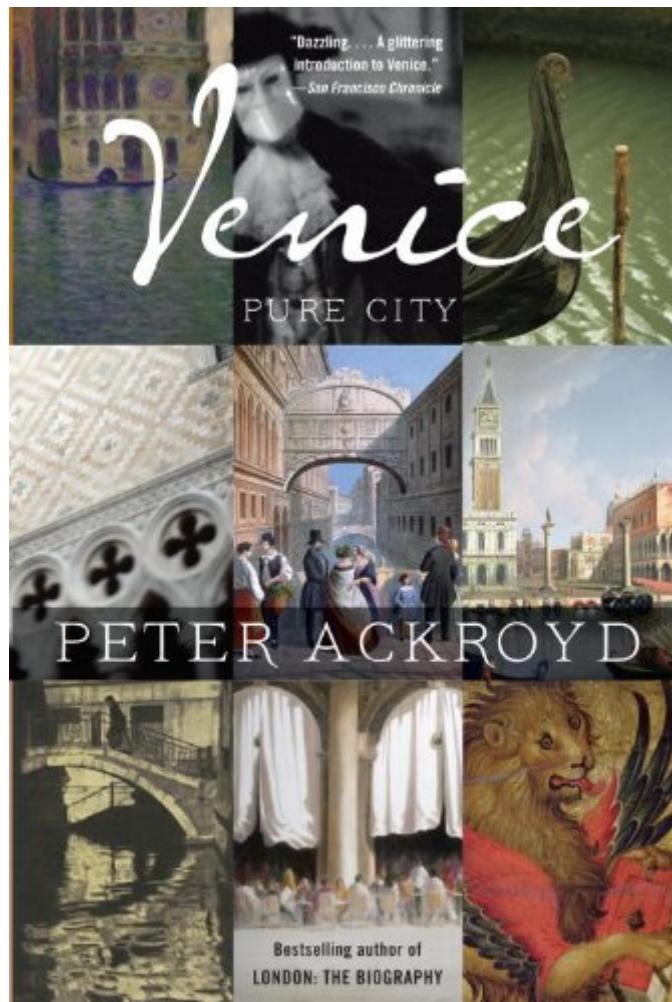


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# Venice: Pure City



## **Synopsis**

Peter Ackroyd at his most magical and magisterial -- a glittering, evocative, fascinating, story-filled portrait of Venice. In this sumptuous vision of Venice, Peter Ackroyd turns his unparalleled skill at evoking place from London and the River Thames, to Italy and the city of myth, mystery and beauty, set like a jewel in its glistening lagoon. His account is at once romantic and packed with facts, conjuring up the atmosphere of the canals, bridges and sunlit squares, the churches and the markets, the fiestas and the flowers. He leads us through the history of the city, from the first refugees arriving in the mists of the lagoon in the fourth century to the rise of a great mercantile state and a trading empire, the wars against Napoleon and the tourist invasions of today. Everything is here: the merchants on the Rialto and the Jews in the ghetto; the mosaics of St Mark's and the glass blowers of Murano; the carnival masks and the sad colonies of lepers; the doges and the destitute and the artists with their passion for colour and form -- Bellini, Titian, Tintoretto, Tiepolo. There are wars and sieges, scandals and seductions, fountains playing in deserted squares and crowds thronging the markets. And there is a dark undertone too, of shadowy corners and dead ends, prisons and punishment. The language and way of thinking of the Venetians sets them aside from the rest of Italy. They are an island people, linked to the sea and to the tides rather than the land. 'The moon rules Venice,' Ackroyd writes: 'It is built on ocean shells and ocean ground; it has the aspect of infinity. It is the floating world... changing and variable and accidental.' This book, like a magic gondola, transports its readers to that sensual, surprising realm. We could have no better guide -- reading Ackroyd's Venice is, in itself, a glorious journey and the perfect holiday. From the Trade Paperback edition.

## **Book Information**

File Size: 3640 KB

Print Length: 432 pages

Publisher: Anchor; Reprint edition (November 2, 2010)

Publication Date: November 2, 2010

Language: English

ASIN: B003F3PK36

Text-to-Speech: Not enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #373,285 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #33

inÃ  Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Travel > Europe > Italy > Venice #80

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## Customer Reviews

I liked Peter Ackroyd's "Venice: Pure City." The book is big, about 6 1/2 by 9 1/2, with just over 400 pages, so getting through it in detail, which is worth it, can take a while. One thing immediately noticeable is the jacket, or half-jacket, that covers only the bottom 6 inches of the cover. The half-jacket bears the name of the book and a standard view of St. Mark's Square with the Doge's Palace, and in front of it, several gondolas in the Grand Canal. The upper part of the cover and the half-jacket reveal what almost all travelers have noted, that Venice is very beautiful. What is hiding behind Peter Ackroyd's half-jacket is the lower part of the cover, which I daresay cannot be called beautiful. Grotesque is a better word. I won't tell you what is depicted, which for all I know may come only with the hardcopy (the hardcopy would be my recommendation). But the pretty jacket concealing something that is not pretty, fits in with Ackroyd's overall revelations about Venice throughout the book. Ackroyd stresses that Venice has always rested uneasy on the sea and is predominately surface and show. The faÃƒÆ'Ã Ã§ades of houses are covered with attractive sheets of varied colors of marble. Hence the beauty. Behind the faÃƒÆ'Ã Ã§ades, the construction material is brick, not blocks of marble. The houses rest on 10 or 12-foot wooden poles sunk down into the mud to reach a firm foundation of harder clay and dense sand. These pilings can last a thousand years if they remain submerged. Returned to air they would crumble. The sea continuously seeks to reclaim Venice's 35-mile by 6-mile stretch of 117 islands. The city has always been in danger of disappearing into the sea. Yet the sea and the city's industry have been their life of far-flung trade. Ackroyd traces its history from early beginnings to a once great warring empire to its present position of attracting and depending upon worldwide tourism. Ackroyd's enormous research is greatly evident. His writing is masterly. He is an excellent guide through Venice's life, religion, government, trade, industry, history, and myth. Venice is thoroughly fascinating.

One of Ackroyd's best. A delightful (and sometimes awful - see the chapter on the first Ghetto) historical survey of a marvellous city, filled with anecdotes and interesting facts, in the author's usual

excellent style. I can't think why more people haven't five starred this extremely diverting book.

Having been a visitor to Venice more than a dozen times, cannot wait to return with an heightened sense of awe, mystery, love and trepidation - thanks to the captivating writing found in this tome, which is perfect island reading.

Read it before a recent trip; super prep for visiting Venice.

This book is indispensable for anyone who wishes to know more about the history, the people and the culture of Venice. It is thoroughly researched and beautifully written. I am getting ready for my second trip to Venice and I am very glad I had the chance to prepare some of my visits with the detailed historical analysis of this book. I strongly recommend to anyone who enjoys traveling and good literature.

Sent this off to a fellow Venice friend and she loved it. Can't wait to return to Venice this May...after reading my new book

ONE OF THE LAST BOOKS ON VENICE VERY WELL WRITTEN THAT GIVES A GOOD IDEA OF A REPUBLIC THAT LASTED 2000 YEARS ! ! ! I REALLY ENJOY IT .

Venice has managed to survive poised half way between land and sea for nearly 1,500 years. It is a great story that deserves to be told by a talented writer. Peter Ackroyd is a gifted writer but the structure upon which he constructs his book is faulty. Ackroyd is more interested in mood and character than he is conventional history. As an example, he would rather eloquently quote numerous sources who complain about Venetian perfidy instead of showing concrete examples of this conduct. History is best told with vivid examples of real conduct. Generalizations no matter how well written soon become tiresome. "Venice: Pure City" is a wonderful example of fine writing with no real vision.

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