

Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia

Secret Itineraries in Palazzo Ducale



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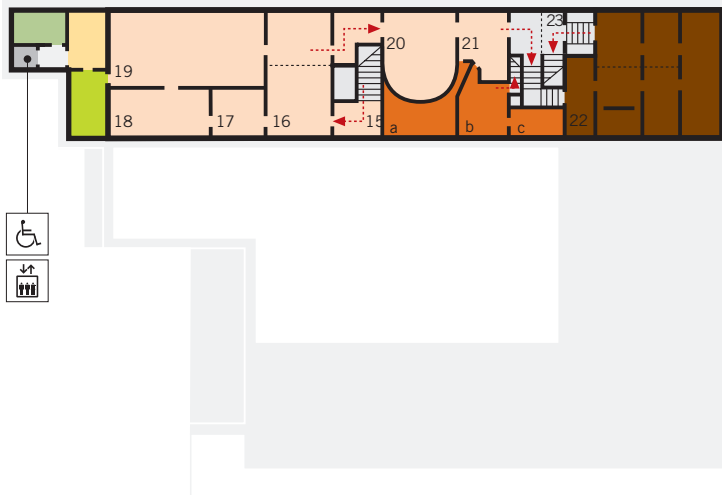
The Secret Itinerary through the Doge's Palace covers the rooms and chambers where the delicate work of some of the most important bodies in the Venetian administration was carried out. The tour offers an interesting insight into the civil and political history of the city, its public organisations and administration of justice.

The visit must be **previously booked, and can only take place at certain times and conditions and in the company of a special tour guide** who will explain all features of each individual room.

The tour takes about 1 hour and 15 minutes long.

The ticket includes the guided tour to the Secret Itineraries and grants access, without a guide, to the Doge's Palace.

Palazzo Ducale / Floor 2



SECRET ITINERARIES

- a Rooms of the Ducal Notary and the Deputato alla Segreteria and the Chamber of the Secret Chancellery
- b Chamber of the Three Head Magistrates
- c Chamber of the inquisitors

Institutional Chamber

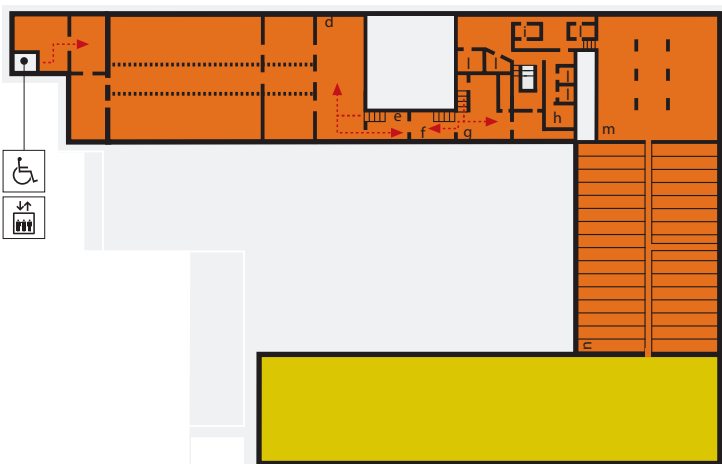
Armoury

Didactic Rooms

Museum areas currently not accessible

Direction and Offices

Palazzo Ducale / Floor 3



SECRET ITINERARIES

- d Higher Chancellery
 - e Chamber of the deputy of the Chancellery
 - f Chamber of the Deputy
 - g Torture Chamber and Sala dell'Avogadore di Comune
 - h First Cell of Casanova
 - i Second Cell of Casanova
 - l Piombi
 - m Armoury
 - n Chamber of the Great Council
- Museum areas currently not accessible

THE ITINERARY

From the large and bright courtyard of Palazzo Ducale, rich in precious marble decorations, going through a narrow door on the ground floor, you'll find yourself in the Pozzi (wells).

They were terrible places of detention, consisting of small wet cells, barely lit by oil lamps, ventilated only through round holes in thick stone walls and closed in by locked doors with solid bolts. In each cell there was a wood litter, a shelf for the few things the detainee could keep and a wooden bucket with a lid to contain human excrement. From some writings and some drawings on the walls we can imagine the feelings of despair and the desire for freedom of the prisoners.

Rooms of the Ducal Notary and the Deputato alla Segreta

A narrow staircase takes you up to the **two small rooms** that housed important officers of the institutional machinery: the Ducal Notary and the *Deputato alla Segreta*. Interconnected, these lead into the Square Atrium.

The Notary functioned as a sort of secretary to the various magistrature within the Republic, whilst the *Deputato alla Segreta* kept a special archive for the Council of Ten, containing reserved material.

From here one passes up to the **Office of the Great Chancellor**, head of what today would be known as the General Archives. Due to the delicate nature of his work, this was the only public figure to be elected directly by the Great Council. This staircase leads to the large and beautiful **Chamber of the Secret Chancellery**, whose walls are lined with cabinets containing public and secret documents relating to the work of most of the Venetian magistrature.

Passing through the small room of the Deputy to the Chancellery one comes to the **Torture Chamber**, also known as the Chamber of Torment; this disturbing place is linked directly with the Prisons. Though torture was practised in Venice, it was not particularly savage or gruesome, and from the 17th century onwards it was gradually abandoned; by the 18th century it had practically been abolished altogether.

The Piombi

From the Torture Chamber you pass to the so-called **Piombi**. The name comes from the lead [piombo] covering on the roof. These cells were used exclusively for the prisoners of the Council of Ten, either those accused of political crimes, those awaiting sentence or those serving short prison terms.



Rooms of the Ducal Notary and the Deputato alla Segreta



Office of the Great Chancellor



Chamber of the Secret Chancellery



The Torture Chamber

Located directly under the roof, the 6 or 7 cells were formed of wooden partitions to which were nailed sheets of iron. Though so vividly described by Giacomo Casanova, the *Piombi* did in fact offer prisoners much better conditions than those in the *pozzi* (the wells), the terrible cells on the ground floor of the Doge's Palace.

From the *Piombi* you pass directly under the roof to the attic located at the corner of the building between the waterfront and canal-side facades.

This was the site of one of the corner towers of the much earlier castle occupied by the Doge.

The cabinets contain a number of weapons, most of them 16th century.

From this attic, two long flights of stairs bring one to the **Chamber of the Inquisitors**, a much-feared magistratura that was set up in 1539 to protect state secrets (its full title was *Inquisitori alla propagazione dei segreti dello Stato*). Two of the three inquisitors were chosen from the Council of Ten, the third from among the district councillors who attended upon the Doge.

The ceiling is decorated with works by Tintoretto, painted in 1566–1567.

Chamber of the Three Head

From here one passes through to the **Chamber of the Three Head Magistrates**, chosen every month from amongst the members of the Council of Ten.

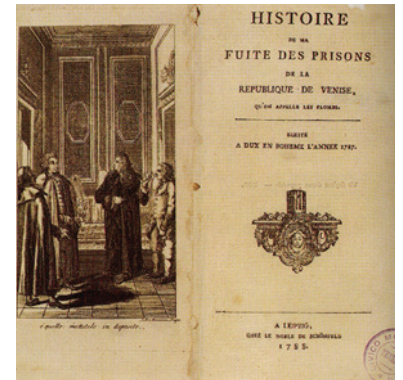
They were responsible for preparing court cases and seeing that the Council rulings were carried out as quickly as possible.

The decoration of the ceiling dates from 1553–1554.

The octagonal central panel with *The Victory of Virtue over Vice* is the work of Giambattista Zelotti, whilst the side compartments are by Giambattista Ponchino and Paolo Veronese.



The Piombi



Giacomo Casanova,
*Histoire de ma fuite des prisons
de la République de Venise qu'on appelle
les Plombs*, 1788



Chamber of the Three Head



Giovan Battista Zelotti
The Victory of Virtue over Vice

General information

Venue

Palazzo Ducale

Piazza San Marco, Venice

How to get there

Vaporetto

Line 1, Vallaresso or San Zaccaria stop;

Line 2 Giardinetti stop;

Line 5.1 or Line 4.1, San Zaccaria stop

Secret itineraries in Palazzo Ducale - Opening Hours and Tickets

Not accessible with the standard ticket, this tour takes the visitor into the most secret and fascinating rooms of Palazzo Ducale; the tour is accompanied by a specialized guide, for a minimum of 2 people and a maximum of 25.

The tour takes about 1 hour and 15 minutes long.

The ticket includes the guided tour to the Secret Itineraries and grants access, without a guide, to the Doge's Palace.

For ticket information and opening hours please consult the website:

www.palazzoducale.visitmuve.it

Bookings

- on-line: **www.palazzoducale.visitmuve.it**

- calling the call center: **848082000** (from Italy); **+39 041 42730892** (only from abroad)
from Monday to Friday, excluding holidays, from 09:00 to 13:00

The booking office will also reply to customers through the e-mail address prenotazionivenezia@coopculture.it

Accessibility



The spaces have, in some cases, small size and are on different levels connected by steep and narrow stairs: are therefore not accessible to those with mobility problems and is not recommended for those suffering from claustrophobia, vertigo of cardio-respiratory disorders. They are also not suitable for pregnant women. Children under 6 are not allowed.

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