

# A floating limousine

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**I**n Venice, nothing looks the same as it does in other cities: instead of streets, there are canals; instead of lanes for pedestrians, there are bridges; and instead of cars, there are boats. That's because the city is built on 118 islands linked by

bridges. Its palaces, shops, and workshops are standing on millions of wooden piles.

There are no traffic jams in Venice because residents either go on foot or take a *vaporetto*, a steam-powered water-bus—unless they're going to a ball or opera, when they might opt to take an elegant *gondola*.

A gondola is like a floating limousine. It has a chauffeur, too—called a *gondolier*—who wears a striped shirt and straw hat. He uses only one oar, which is attached to the starboard side. But the boat still manages to go straight. How is that possible? Because the port side is wider and higher, so the boat is slightly tilted

The gondola has a cousin: the *traghetto*, a gondola without seats—you sail in it standing up. It can carry up to eight passengers and the route is very short: from one side of the **Grand Canal**—the largest canal in Venice—to the other.

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