Palazzo is the perfect party pad

Celebrate carnival in a 15th-century Venetian flat with a modern twist, says Susan Emmett

R

efuge, tradehall, musee, party town—Venice has been many things to many people over millennia. But it is the city’s spectacular talent for turning decades into an art form that will draw the crowds to the Carnivale next Saturday. For ten days before Lent, the carnival sets in, revelers from all corners of the world will pour into Venice to enjoy parades and parties in Piazza San Marco and the city’s many corners (squares).

Some will spend thousands dressing up for opulent balls held in the palazzi along the Grand Canal. Others, who have bought second homes in town, will seize the chance to host private masked balls in their own piano nobile residences.

As house parties go, it would be a hard one to beat. There are few more impressive ways to entertain than to throw a little shindig in your holiday bolthole in Europe’s most unusual and romantic city. "It’s very sociable," says Antonia Doisy, of Sotheby’s International Realty in Venice. "There is always something going on. People are always going out, entertaining and meeting friends."

Venice might have all the advantages of a big city as great art, architecture, bars and restaurants, but it is small enough to allow for the human interaction of a village—or, in this case, global village.

After the Carnivale in February, Doyle’s diary is punctuated with events such as the Fiera di San Marco on April 9, the contemporary art biennale from May and the film festival, which begins in August. Each event is a draw for the world’s rich and famous as well as thousands looking for places to stay.

As 300 million tourists descend on Venice each year, some celebrities, such as Johnny Depp, buy up their yachts and stay home. Others invest in dreamy homes. Ellin John and David Furnish have holiday homes to which they fly from the glory Hotel Cipriani in Giudecca, the small island opposite Piazza San Marco. Presumably the singer bought there to better admire the great square. Camped in by distance. The big money usually stays in the San Marco district and the stretches of the Grand Canal, where prices for a high-end home start at about €5,000 (US$6,000) per square metre.

Doyle explains that the polizia on the Grand Canal command top prices but only if they are downstream of the Rialto bridge. Anything too close to the famous bridge loses its appeal to international buyers unless the apartment features a boat dock for easy access to the city’s waterways.

"In a rare find," Luigi Capaccio, managing director of Patron Capital Finals, says, "There’s a collection of high-end property in Venice that is exceptionally limited. In most cases, a buyer can either buy a whole building, which is expensive for most buyers, or an apartment in a building that has been developed but where the common areas may not be kept to a very high standard."

There’s none of that here. Knowing that contemporary interior appeal is the most to the class of international buyer he’s trying to attract, Capaccio called in, Culti, a Milanese design house that is known for its chic neutral style.

The listed Palazzo Molin has been converted into 18 apartments near the Piazza San Marco. The modern interiors are by Culti, a Milanese design house that is known for its chic neutral style.