



right: Canaletto, *Entrance to the Grand Canal from the Molo, Venice*, 1742/1744, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Gift of Mrs. Barbara Hutton

below: Giovanni Antonio Canal, detail of engraving by Antonio Visentini, after G.B. Piazzetta, in *Prospectus Magni Canalis Venetiarum*, 1735, Biblioteca nazionale Marciana, Venice



1 Venetian Artist

Giovanni Antonio Canal (1697–1768) is best known for his painted views of his hometown: Venice, Italy. Capturing its appearance and distinctive character, his paintings transport viewers back to this famous city on the water. He was nicknamed Canaletto (the little Canal) to distinguish him from his father, who was also an artist. Canaletto specialized in topographical views—paintings that describe the landscape and architecture of a particular place. His paintings were popular because he recorded in vivid detail the appearance of the city and the diverse activities of its people. To achieve convincing realism in his scenes, Canaletto first made several sketches outside. He then took these quick drawings back to his studio, where he painted his large-scale canvases. He worked on the architecture before he added the figures on the plazas and canals. Canaletto's city views are much more than a painted “photograph”: he often improved the appearance of a place, making it look better than it actually was!



2 Travel Souvenirs

In the eighteenth century, Venice became a favorite tourist destination in Europe. With its beautiful setting, many canals, and magnificent architecture, the city attracted foreign visitors who enjoyed its carnivals, regattas, festivals, and theater. Travelers wanted souvenirs of their visit to Venice. Before cameras were invented, tourists bought paintings and drawings to take home. Canaletto painted scenes of Venice often, and he built a successful career by selling his work to wealthy tourists.

3 Entrance to the Grand Canal

A large Italian port on the Adriatic Sea, Venice was an important center for trade between Asia and Europe. It also boasted a thriving fishing industry. This view shows the popular waterfront leading to the Grand Canal, the main waterway through Venice. Large oceangoing ships, including one with a British flag, have dropped their sails and are anchored to unload their cargo and tourists. Gondolas glide across the glistening water, ferrying passengers across the canals. In the center is the Customs House, where goods are unloaded and taxed. A small globe above its dome symbolizes the city's overseas trade. Groups of people gather along the dock, stop to chat with one another, and shop. Fishermen display the day's catch of eels and mussels in round wooden trays.

4 Saint Mark's Square

Located at the very heart of Venice are Saint Mark's Square and the Church of Saint Mark with its elaborate architecture, bluish domes, and shimmering mosaics. To the right is the pink marble Doge's Palace, once home to the elected rulers of Venice.

Around three bronze flagpoles, merchants set up tables, take goods out of trunks, and display bolts of cloth at booths protected by umbrellas. These activities, and the ships off in the distance, highlight Venice's role as a center of trade. Canaletto included about two hundred figures in this painting!



Canaletto, *The Square of Saint Mark's, Venice, 1742/1744*, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Gift of Mrs. Barbara Hutton

another view

Giovanni Paolo Panini, *Interior of Saint Peter's, Rome*, c. 1754, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund

This view of Saint Peter's shows off the church's large interior and elaborate architectural decorations. The worshipers and visitors provide a sense of scale and enliven the space.



Giovanni Paolo Panini, *Interior of the Pantheon, Rome*, c. 1734, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Samuel H. Kress Collection

With the largest concrete dome in the world, the Pantheon has been one of the most popular monuments of classical Rome. Built as a Roman temple, it was later converted to a Christian church.

Giovanni Paolo Panini

While Canaletto was painting views of Venice, Giovanni Paolo Panini (1691–1765) was working as a “view painter” in Rome. Panini specialized in landscape and architectural views of the most famous and memorable sights of Rome, including the Pantheon and Saint Peter's Basilica at the Vatican. Similar to works by Canaletto, Panini's paintings were popular with visiting tourists, who bought them as a souvenir of their travels.

Postcard Memories

Take an imaginary trip to Italy and write a postcard to a friend.

Choose a painting by Canaletto or Panini and imagine you can “jump” into the scene. What would you do? Where would you explore? Who would you meet?

Write a postcard from this place and describe your travels. Begin with, “I visited _____ and I saw _____.”

Create a postcard picture of your hometown

Make a postcard by cutting a piece of white cardstock or watercolor paper into a rectangle (3.5 × 5 inches or 4 × 6 inches). On one side, use colored pencils to draw a view of your hometown. Choose a well-known park, school, monument, or shopping center. Add details of the landscape, buildings, and people. Divide the other side in half. On the left side, write a note to a friend, a family member, or yourself! Share a special memory of your hometown. On the right side, write the address on the postcard, place a stamp in the upper right corner, and send it in the mail.