

Glass in Venice

After tourism, glassmaking is Venice's second-biggest industry. Shoppers should venture beyond the stores selling unappealing glass souvenirs near touristy Piazza San Marco. On the nearby island of Murano, they will find some beautiful products created by talented artisans.

Venice's glassmaking history is said to date back before the first millennium. By 1291, the city had suffered so many fires caused by the glass houses' constant need for high heat that the Council of the Venetian Republic demanded all glass houses move to Murano. Centuries later, some of the world's finest glass products still hail from the island, a 15-minute boat ride from Piazza San Marco.

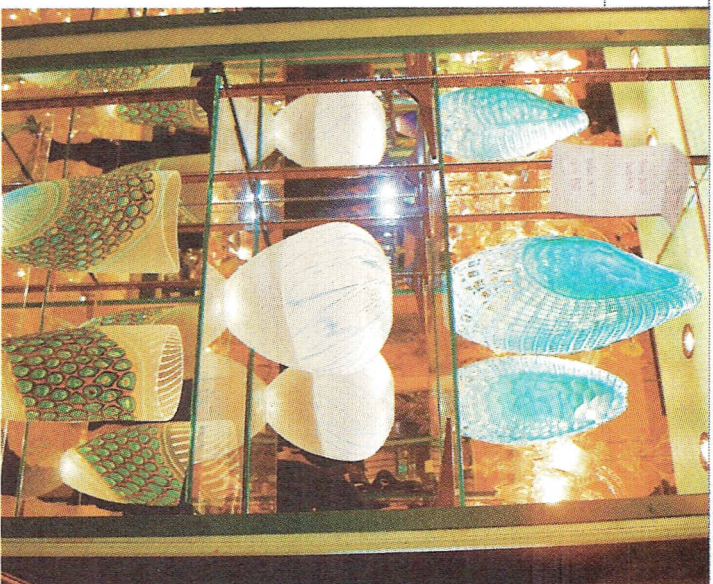
Not all of the multitude of glass shops on Murano are worth visiting, but a must-stop is the factory/showroom of **Signoretti le Bricole** (Calle San Cipriano 48, tel: 39 041 527 4294; www.signoretti.it), best known for its chandeliers that hang in Venetian hotels and around the world. A favourite of actor Nicolas Cage, Signoretti features works by such glass masters as Pino Signoretto, famous for his life-like pieces,

and Massimiliano Schiavon, who, at 33, is considered a prodigy and creates amazing vases and sculptures.

Throughout Venice you'll see beautifully coloured glass balloons that seem to float in the air. The loveliest can be found at **Ma.Re** (Via XXII Marzo 2088, tel: 39 041 52 31191; www.mareglass.com), which sells modern and artistic glass. Don't be put off by the boutique's proximity to Piazza San Marco. This store has exceptional products and is the city's exclusive dealer for the famed Salviati products.

Those looking for a first-rate selection of contemporary collectors' items should head to **Galleria Marina Barovier** (San Marco 3216, tel: 041 523 6748; www.barovier.it). Works from the great Lino Tagliapietra as well as Dante Marioni and Cristiano Bianchin are for sale. An exhibition dedicated to Tagliapietra runs until February 28.

For something more whimsical, **Laguna B** (www.lagunab.com) is the perfect choice. Designer Marie Brandolini is affectionately known as the Glass Contessa. Married to Count Brandino Brandolini, she launched her affordable and



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colourful line of vases, plates and glasses in 1996. You can find her creations at **L'angolo del Passato** (Dorsoduro 3276; tel: 39 041 528 7896) and historical **Palazzo Grassi** (San Marco 3231, tel: 39 041 523 9350; www.palazzograssi.it).
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