



CITTA' DI
VENEZIA



San Michele Cemetery



The **San Michele Cemetery** in Venice boasts a long and distinguished history, spanning from its origins as a Benedictine monastic complex, through its monumental nineteenth-century development, to its most recent expansion designed by the renowned architect **David Chipperfield**. This “Island of the Dead” is a place unlike any other in the world and is rightfully included in the European network of significant cemeteries (ASCE, www.significantcemeteries.net).

The monastic settlement of San Michele is closely connected with the **Camaldolese Order**, founded by **Saint Romuald**. Around the year 980, during a pilgrimage to Saint Mark’s Basilica to venerate the saint’s relics, Romuald spent some time on what was then an uninhabited island. In 1212, the Chapter of Torcello granted the island to the Camaldolese monks, who built a church and a hermitage there. In 1250, the hermitage became a monastery and, towards the end of the century, it was elevated to the rank of abbey. Over the centuries, the monastery expanded and became an important cultural centre, associated with figures such as **Fra Mauro**, creator of the celebrated world map now preserved in the **Marciana Library**.

The cemetery’s modern history began in 1804 with the **Napoleonic Edict of Saint-Cloud**, issued by **Napoleon Bonaparte**, which provided for the transfer of the island of **San Cristoforo della Pace** to the Municipality for the construction of the “general cemetery.” The first cemetery project, drawn up in 1808, was entrusted to **Gianantonio Selva**, who had already designed numerous works in Venice, including the **Castello Gardens**, now home to the Venice Biennale.

The Venice cemetery as we know it today, a single island along the **San Cristoforo Canal** linking Venice and Murano and enclosed by its characteristic red brick walls, is the result of the infilling of the canal that originally separated the islands of **San Cristoforo della Pace** and **San Michele**. Work on filling in the canal began in 1833 and was completed in 1839. In 1870, the Municipality commissioned the architect **Annibale Forcellini** of Treviso to enhance the cemetery’s artistic character.

Although only partially completed, the design is distinguished by a Greek-cross layout inscribed within a square, with the main arm ending in a semi-elliptical form and four burial enclosures at the corners. Along the principal north-south axis stands the **Chapel of San Cristoforo**.

The main entrance, on the southern side, is marked by a majestic water gate. In the past, during the annual **Commemoration of the Dead**, it was connected to the city by a **pontoon bridge** extending from the Fondamente to the cemetery itself, a tradition interrupted in 1950 and recently revived in 2019 and again in 2025.

The cemetery expanded progressively through a series of additions. The most recent enlargement made use of a shallow area of the lagoon to create a new island at the north-eastern corner of the site. Here, according to a design by **David Chipperfield**, new above-ground burial structures (Sections 23, 24 and 25) have been built within a complex of courtyards and gardens set at water level, distinguished by a refined and minimalist architectural style.

DISTINGUISHED BURIALS

The **San Michele Island Cemetery** is an open-air museum, home to celebrated figures and countless testimonies to history and art. Writers, statesmen, historians, politicians, artists, heroes, and footballers are among the many distinguished individuals who helped shape not only the history and culture of Venice, but also that of Italy as a whole, and who now rest in this Venetian cemetery.

Throughout the cemetery, information panels have been placed near significant graves, providing visitors with key historical and cultural insights about the individuals buried there.

Given the richness and complexity of the cemetery’s heritage, a degree of selection and synthesis has been unavoidable. We apologize for any omissions.

THE CHURCH OF SAN MICHELE AND THE EMILIANI CHAPEL - The Church of San Michele was built between 1469 and 1479 by the architect Mauro Codussi of Bergamo on the site of a pre-existing Gothic structure. It is considered the first example of Renaissance architecture in Venice.

The interior features a three-nave layout, with a presbytery, a central apse, and two side chapels (the Zorzi Chapel and the Donà Chapel). From the left nave, visitors can access the Chapel of the Holy Cross (Cappella della Croce), belonging to the Priuli family. Its name derives from one of the largest and most precious relics brought from the Holy Land, once preserved here. On the left side of the church stands the elegant Emiliani Chapel, an outstanding example of Renaissance architecture crowned by a white dome of Istrian stone. It is the only polygonal temple of its kind built in Venice during that period. The chapel was erected in the mid-sixteenth century to a design by Guglielmo De' Grigi, known as Il Bergamasco, at the request of Margherita Vitturi in memory of her husband, Giovanni Battista Emiliani.



THE MONASTERY, THE CLOISTERS, AND THE HEMICYCLE - The Monastery of San Michele in Isola produced a number of bishops, patriarchs and cardinals for the Church, as well as a pope, Mauro Cappellari, who ascended to the papal throne in 1831 under the name Gregory XVI.

Despite extensive nineteenth-century alterations and adaptations made to accommodate the needs of the cemetery, the complex has retained the elegant appearance resulting from the last major sixteenth-century renovation. From the churchyard, visitors pass through the Gothic portal, surmounted by a high-relief sculpture depicting Saint Michael the Archangel slaying the dragon, to enter the first fifteenth-century cloister, which is enriched by numerous Neoclassical monuments belonging to the post-Canovan tradition.

Beyond the first cloister lies the second cloister, composed of 33 arches supported by Ionic columns. It surrounds the Magnolia Garden, through which visitors reach the elevated San Rocco Hemicycle, home to 38 nineteenth-century chapels, several of which are of particular artistic and historical interest, including the Salviati Chapel.



NON-CATHOLIC SECTIONS - From the time of its modern foundation, the San Michele Cemetery included dedicated areas for Protestant-Evangelical and Greek Orthodox faithful. These sections reached their present location only after several relocations resulting from the cemetery's gradual expansion.

These two areas are particularly evocative, characterized by abundant vegetation and naturally grown trees that convey the serenity and "peaceful seclusion" traditionally associated with non-Catholic cemeteries. They are the final resting place of many distinguished figures, including Sergei Diaghilev, Igor Stravinsky, Emilio Vedova, Ezra Pound, Joseph Brodsky, Helenio Herrera, and others.



MONUMENTAL SOUTHERN GATE - STUCKY CHAPEL - The cemetery's monumental entrance gate on the Fondamenta Nove side is distinguished by its wrought-iron gates and two highly significant side chapels, including the Stucky family chapel. This chapel is decorated with mosaics produced by Salviati-Jesurum & Co. and the Venice and Murano Company, depicting a procession of angels in a distinctly Pre-Raphaelite style, based on designs by Augusto Sezzane. In recent years (2019 and again in 2025), the tradition of installing a pontoon bridge during the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed has been revived. The bridge, extending for more than 400 metres and composed of twenty floating sections, provides a direct connection between the city and the cemetery.

SCATTERING OF ASHES - Within the evocative setting of the monumental entrance gate (also known as the "Stucky Gate"), it is possible to scatter the ashes of the deceased in a natural environment, either in water (by dispersal into the lagoon) or on land within the cemetery grounds, specifically in the Garden of Remembrance (*Giardino del Ricordo*).

San Michele Cemetery

water fountains
and watering cans

southern gate
(ash scattering point)

communal cinerary
ossuary

toilets

ENTRANCE

gatehouse / info point

refreshment area

cemetery offices

church of S. Michele (entrance)

Emiliani chapel

hall for secular ceremonies

mortuary

recinti 23, 24, 25
Chipperfield
Extension

crematorium

S. Cristoforo chapel

- | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| 1 E. Pound
(1885-1972) | 5 I. Stravinskij
(1882-1971) | 9 D. Tramontin
(1854-1928) | 13 E. Vedova
(1919-2006) | 17 V. Guidi
(1891-1984) | 21 P. G. Molmenti
(1852-1928) | 25 F. Wickhoff
(1853-1909) | 29 G. Sardi
(1863-1913) |
| 2 A. Clarke
(1903-1994) | 6 C. Baseggio / G. Gallina
(1897-1971 / 1852-1897) | 10 G. Lorenzetti
(1885-1951) | 14 L. Baccara
(1892-1985) | 18 H. Herrera
(1910-1997) | 22 Z. Mušič
(1909-2005) | 26 G. Renier Michiel
(1755-1832) | 30 G. Zervós
(1937-2020) |
| 3 J. Brodskij
(1940-1996) | 7 E. e T. Wolf Ferrari
(1876-1948 / 1878-1945) | 11 L. Nono
(1924-1990) | 15 F. Basaglia
(1924-1980) | 19 P. Leonardi
(1908-1998) | 23 A. Pizzinato
(1910-2004) | 27 P. Fragiaco
(1856-1922) | 31 R. Calasso
(1941-2021) |
| 4 S. Djagilev
(1872-1929) | 8 F. Rolfe / E. Ciardi
(1860-1913 / 1879-1933) | 12 C. Doppler
(1803-1853) | 16 A. Del Zotto
(1852-1918) | 20 L. Masiero
(1927-2010) | 24 C. Vighy
(1936-2010) | 28 G. Querini Stampalia
(1799-1869) | 32 H. Kockisch
(1944-2025) |



SOCREM VENICE AND THE CREMATORIUM - Section XVII - On 25 April 1882, the **Venetian Cremation Society (SOCREM)** was founded. Recognized as a public-benefit institution in 1887, it was one of the first organizations of its kind in Italy. The crematorium and cinerarium were built on a **600-square-metre site** granted by the Municipality in 1889. Among the cinerary urns preserved in the **SOCREM Temple** on San Michele is that of **Luigi De Col**, one of the **Thousand** volunteers who landed at **Marsala** on **11 May 1860** during **Garibaldi's Expedition of the Thousand**, launched from **Quarto (Genoa)** with the aim of achieving the unification of Italy.

MONUMENTS - Between the end of the nineteenth century and the 1920s, the cemetery became a centre of activity for several sculptors working in Venice, whose artistic production ranged from **Naturalism** to **Symbolism**.

The **Paluello Monument**, for example, features a realistic and narrative composition built on multiple planes of depth, depicting Mrs. Paluello emerging from the wall under the gaze of her husband, the family dog, and her mother-in-law. Among the most imposing funerary monuments are the **Papadopoli Monument** (1899), featuring the monumental Angel of the Resurrection by the sculptor **Luigi Ferrari**, and the **Pacifico Ceresa Monument** (1899-1900), dedicated to the first senator of the Kingdom of Italy. This monument includes the celebrated Veiled Woman by **Emilio Marsili** and the architectural structure designed by **Antonio Salvadori**, commemorating the painter **Antonio Dal Zotto**.

FRANCISCAN FRIARS' VINEYARD - This vineyard is part of a network of rediscovered vineyards that the association **Laguna nel Bicchiere**, with the support of its volunteers, continues to cultivate in order to produce wines native to the islands of the Venetian Lagoon. At San Michele, a vineyard inherited from the Franciscan friars in 2008 produces **Malvasia**, **Dorona**, and **Prosecco** grapes. The harvest is used to make a sacramental wine known as "**In Vino Veritas, San Michele in Purezza**."

ARCHCONFRATERNITY OF SAN CRISTOFORO AND MERCY - The **Archconfraternity of San Cristoforo and Mercy of Venice** was founded in 1813, following the first burials in the new cemetery. In **1891**, the Municipality of Venice granted the Archconfraternity the perpetual use of the new **Chapel of San Cristoforo** and entrusted it with the administration of the burial rights for several thousand burial spaces within the **San Michele Cemetery**.

CURIOSITIES - Among the notable individuals buried at San Michele Cemetery, the least well known is undoubtedly **Alfredo Bacchini**. However, his tomb has a unique feature: it is the only grave whose **headstone can be seen from outside the cemetery** when approaching by motorboat. Located in the highest row, in the last vertical column of niches in Section 5 bis, its south-western exposure offers an open view of the lagoon and its spectacular red sunsets. The **first burial** to take place, only a few days after the opening of San Michele Cemetery, was that of **Mariana Bosa** (or **Bozza**), a 36-year-old maidservant. According to local tradition, she had attended the blessing of the cemetery with her friends and wondered aloud who would be the first person to be laid to rest in the new burial ground. Hidden from most visitors since the churchyard ceased to be the cemetery's main entrance, two commemorative plaques recall that the island of San Michele was not always a cemetery. One commemorates the period when the former Camaldolese monastery was converted by the Austrian authorities into a state prison, where **Silvio Pellico** and **Pietro Maroncelli** were held. The other plaque is dedicated to **Fra Mauro**, the Camaldolese monk who, between **1448 and 1459**, created a world map on parchment sheets mounted on a wooden panel measuring approximately **2.3 × 2.3 metres**. Now preserved in the **Marciana Library**, it is considered the most important work of Venetian cartography produced before the discovery of the Americas.

THE CENTURIES-OLD BEECH TREE - Outside the Evangelical section and the SOCREM area stands a magnificent **weeping beech tree**, one of the oldest and most beautiful trees in the cemetery. This majestic monumental tree is almost **180 years old** and, with its long cascading branches, gracefully embraces the space around it, as though keeping watch over the eternal rest of those buried within the cemetery grounds.





ACCESS

San Michele Cemetery is accessible via ACTV waterbus services
line: **4.1 4.2** stop: Cemetery



OPENING HOURS

Summer Opening Hours: 7:30 am - 6:00 pm

Winter Opening Hours: 7:30 am - 4:30 pm

Admission is permitted until 30 minutes before closing time.

Christmas Day, Easter Day and New Year's Day: closing at 12:00 noon. **Commemoration of the Faithful Departed (All Souls' Day):** 7:30 am - 5:00 pm.



RECEPTION / CEMETERY GATEHOUSE

Tel: 041 729 2841



CEMETERY OFFICES

Monday to Saturday: 8:00 am - 12:00 noon

Tel: 041 9655525

Email: concessioni.cim.venezia@gruppoveritas.it



MUNICIPAL MORTUARY SERVICES - CITY OF VENICE

San Marco - Campo Manin, 4023

Office Hours: 9:00 am - 12:00 noon, by appointment only

Tel: 041 2748255 / 8176 / 8254 / 7924

Email: mortuaria.polizia@comune.venezia.it



SOCREM VENEZIA - Venetian Cremation Society

Section XVII, San Michele Cemetery

Head Office: Cannaregio 5289, 30121 - Venezia.

Tel: 041 522 4770

Opening hours: Monday - Friday 9:00 am - 12:30 pm,

Wednesday: 9.00 am - 12.30 pm / 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm



ARCICONFRATERNITA DI SAN CRISTOFORO E DELLA MISERICORDIA

Head Office: San Polo 134, 30125 - Venezia. Tel: 041 5224745

Opening Hours: Monday to Friday: 9:00 am - 12:00 noon



CHURCH OF SAN MICHELE

Visits by appointment only. Tel: +39 041 5274106

RULES OF CONDUCT AND PROHIBITIONS

Photography, video recording and guided group tours are regulated by the Cemetery Regulations, which can be consulted at www.gruppoveritas.it e www.comune.venezia.it.

THE FOLLOWING ARE PROHIBITED:

- entering the cemetery while wearing inappropriate clothing or engaging in behaviour that is unsuitable and inconsistent with the dignity and tranquillity of the site;
- bringing animals into the cemetery, including those on a leash;
- disposing of waste outside the designated bins;
- remaining on or around graves to consume food or beverages.

PLEASE NOTE THAT:

- any equipment used (ladders, watering cans, etc.) must be returned to its designated place after use;
- flowers, plants and decorations must be placed within the areas designated for individual graves and must not obstruct passageways or public access areas;
- the maintenance of graves and tombs is the responsibility of the families concerned.



San Michele Cemetery
is managed by

