

PRESS RELEASE

A STRUCTURED PROJECT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE JEWISH GHETTO IN VENICE

The new year is getting off to an exciting start with guided tours and cultural events as the Synagogues and Jewish Museum of Venice come under the management of Opera Laboratori, Italy's leader in the field of cultural management, in cooperation with the Jewish Community of Venice

Opera Laboratori is celebrating 2023 in the Venetian lagoon with a development and management project for Venice's Jewish Ghetto devised in conjunction with the city's Jewish Community. An ancient neighbourhood situated in the heart of the city, Europe's first "ghetto" is celebrated throughout the world for the singular origin and history that have lent it an extraordinarily intriguing and fascinating aspect over the centuries, with its tall buildings in warm and welcoming colours overlooking broad squares and spaces surrounded by canals. Opera Laboratori, one of Italy's leading operators in the field of cultural management, has devised a completely new project for its promotion and enhancement in conjunction with the Jewish Community of Venice. The project involves managing the Ghetto's five synagogues, each with its own individual characteristics and unique features, and the Jewish Museum (currently undergoing restoration) which is one of the most important such museums in Italy in terms of the richness and quality of its collections.

*"Opera Laboratori's new management – explains Professor **Dario Calimani, President of the Jewish Community of Venice** – is already revealing the extent of the sense of cooperation and talent for initiative that the firm is capable of bringing into play. As soon as the major restoration and renovation project on which we are working is complete, Venice's new Jewish Museum will demand that we set about without delay developing new activities and events in an effort to rekindle the public's interest in the Venetian Ghetto and its history. Thanks to the*

immense amount of experience that Opera has built up nationwide, it is perfectly positioned to develop new management methods and cultural projects that will allow visitors to enjoy the treasures of the city's Jewish neighbourhood in a thoroughly up-to-date, state-of-the-art fashion. With Opera, our Community is getting set to embrace new ways of interacting with the city and its visitors”.

Some two years after its agreement with the Jewish Community of Florence for the promotion and enhancement of the Synagogue and Jewish Museum in the Tuscan capital and the Synagogue in Siena, Opera Laboratori has now signed an agreement renewing its commitment to its mission involving promoting art and culture in the country's leading museums whose management it has so successfully handled over the past twenty years. Ranging from the Uffizi and the Galleria dell'Accademia in Florence to Siena Cathedral, the Royal Palace in Caserta, the Archaeological Park in Pompeii and the Pinacoteca di Brera in Milan, Opera Laboratori continues to welcome millions of visitors to the sixty plus museums and cultural sites that it runs throughout the country, producing a vast number of exhibitions and cultural events in addition to lavishing care on works of art and on artistic textiles – including Jewish fabrics – in its specialist workshops.

*“It is an honour for us – says **Opera Laboratori President Beppe Costa** – to be able to cooperate with the Jewish Community of Venice in such a historic site as Europe's first ghetto. We enter here on tiptoe, with the expertise of staff specialising in the management and enhancement of a site that is so different from a standard museum yet equally rich in history, art and traditions. We truly believe that with our technical and restoration workshops we can bring added value to these monuments and collections which speak straight to the heart, as well as to the eyes, of so many people”.*

The agreement sets out to enhance the cultural heritage of the Jewish Community of Venice with a comprehensive project that includes multimedia supports, an integrated online platform for reservations and advance sales and new hard and soft copy guides designed to enable visitors to enjoy their experience in full.

This ambitious project, shared with the Community, looks to the future but it has allowed us to rehire all the staff working in the various museum sites under the previous management. **500 years on, the Jewish Community of Venice continues to play a vibrant role in the city's cultural**

life, cherishing its religious traditions and offering its artistic and cultural heritage to visitors from all over the world.

That history centres on the word “ghetto”, a term found in old documents with a variety of different spellings, including *ghèto*, *getto*, *ghetto* and *geto*, often used to indicate the place in which Jews were confined. It is said to derive from the name of the area in which the city’s old foundries were situated, but what it makes it truly unique is that it is still a lively neighbourhood today, with two synagogues open to the public which continue to host the Jewish Community’s rituals and ceremonies, and where the Community’s religious and administrative institutions continue to maintain an active presence. The Ghetto’s other three synagogues, which are currently undergoing restoration, will be reopening to the public in the coming months.

No traveller or tourist coming to Venice should fail to visit this small yet truly unique world, or to delve into its fascinating history and that of the Jews who have breathed life into the Ghetto over almost three centuries, interacting with the city and contributing with their prolific activities to the life and economy of the Most Serene Republic.

What better opportunity than this to explore the religion, ritual, history, customs and traditions of the Jews in Venice?

The Ghetto can be visited with **guided tours at set times in Italian** (10.30; 11.30; 12.30; 13.30; 14.30; 15.30) **and in English** (11.00; 12.00; 13.00; 14.00; 15.00; 16.00) **hourly from Sunday to Friday** (on Friday alone the last tour in Italian is at 14.30 and the last tour in English at 14.00), **educational tours for schools, exclusive private tours of the two synagogues**, the Levantine Shul and the Spanish Shul, the Cohanim midrash (a study centre founded by the Cohen family in the 1580s) and **tours of the old Jewish cemetery**.

For further information

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