



There are few more picturesque scenes than sipping Prosecco on the banks of a Venetian lagoon, the waters of the Grand Canal lapping at the walls of crumbling palazzi. It's a moment I've enjoyed countless times in over 15 visits to Venice, and one that's imprinted firmly in my memory.

But each time I've raised a glass in the so-called City of Love, I haven't been toasting the view with John, my husband of 45 years. Instead, my constant companion has been my daughter, Rosie.

By the time she joined me in Venice for the first time, in 2000, I'd already visited twice. There's nothing about this beautiful Italian city I don't love, from its eclectic art exhibitions and ancient churches, to discovering the tiny, welcoming cicchetti bars hidden among its streets.

Since John is a bad traveller — and just looking at a water bus would make him feel seasick — I had to go on my own. By booking hosted trips, I'd usually find a fellow traveller to bond with, but mostly I enjoyed exploring alone, soaking up the tranquility of a city based on the water.

I've always been very close to Rosie, and after my second trip, I wanted to take her to my favourite place on earth. I couldn't wait to show her the way the gold tiles on the ceiling of Saint Mark's Basilica glow when they're lit up, and to share the wonderful view from the Accademia Bridge.

I booked us on an Open University trip and, for the first time, set off to explore the city together.

There were a few hiccups — Rosie was flatly unimpressed when our guide dragged us around church after church, until we had sore necks from gazing at dozens of ancient frescoes. She was also eager to discover Venetian cuisine herself, instead of being always obliged to join the group for pre-arranged dinners.

However she was suitably awestruck by hearing the bells of Saint Mark's Campanile up close, and begged me to travel the length of the Grand Canal on a crowded vaporetto more than once. So next time I planned a trip to Venice, she agreed to join me again. Only this time, we'd go it alone.

This was a very different experience, and an even more wonderful one. Venice is notoriously expensive, so we shared a double bed in a tiny B&B. »