Rialto Bridge

The **Rialto Bridge** ([Italian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_language): *Ponte di Rialto*; [Venetian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venetian_language): *Ponte de Rialto*) is the oldest of the four [bridges](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bridge) spanning the [Grand Canal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Canal_(Venice)) in [Venice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venice), [Italy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italy). Connecting the [*sestieri*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sestiere) (districts) of [San Marco](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Marco) and [San Polo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Polo), it has been rebuilt several times since its first construction as a [pontoon bridge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pontoon_bridge) in [1173](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1173), and is now a significant tourist attraction in the city.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rialto_Bridge#cite_note-dupre-3)

History[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Rialto_Bridge&action=edit&section=1" \o "Edit section: History)]

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Rialto_Gondoliers.jpg)

Gondoliers row past a row of gondolas on the Grand Canal near Rialto Bridge

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Rialto_Bridge_at_night2.jpg)

Night view

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ponte_di_Rialto_Canal_Grande_Venezia_Rilievo_San_Marco.jpg)

Detail of the relief of [St. Mark](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_the_Evangelist) on the bridge

The first dry crossing of the Grand Canal was a [pontoon bridge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pontoon_bridge) built in 1181 by [Nicolò Barattieri](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicol%C3%B2_Barattieri" \o "Nicolò Barattieri). It was called the Ponte della Moneta, presumably because of the mint that stood near its eastern entrance.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rialto_Bridge#cite_note-molmenti-4)

The development and importance of the [Rialto](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rialto) market on the eastern bank increased traffic on the floating bridge, so it was replaced in 1255 by a wooden bridge.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rialto_Bridge#cite_note-molmenti-4) This structure had two ramps meeting at a movable central section, that could be raised to allow the passage of tall ships. The connection with the market eventually led to a change of name for the bridge. During the first half of the 15th century, two rows of shops were built along the sides of the bridge. The rents brought an income to the State Treasury, which helped maintain the bridge.

Maintenance was vital for the timber bridge. It was partly burnt in the revolt led by [Bajamonte Tiepolo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bajamonte_Tiepolo" \o "Bajamonte Tiepolo) in 1310. In 1444, it collapsed under the weight of a crowd rushing to see the marriage of the [Marquis of Ferrara](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marquis_of_Ferrara)[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rialto_Bridge#cite_note-dupre-3) and it collapsed again in 1524.

The idea of rebuilding the bridge in [stone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rock_(geology)) was first proposed in 1503. Several projects were considered over the following decades. In 1551, the authorities requested proposals for the renewal of the Rialto Bridge, among other things. Plans were offered by famous architects, such as [Jacopo Sansovino](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacopo_Sansovino), [Palladio](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palladio) and [Vignola](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giacomo_Barozzi_da_Vignola), but all involved a [Classical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical_architecture) approach with several arches, which was judged inappropriate to the situation. [Michelangelo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michelangelo) also was considered as designer of the bridge.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rialto_Bridge#cite_note-dupre-3)

The present stone bridge, a single span designed by [Antonio da Ponte](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antonio_da_Ponte), began to be constructed in 1588 and was completed in 1591.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rialto_Bridge#cite_note-dupre-3) It is similar to the wooden bridge it succeeded. Two ramps lead up to a central [portico](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portico). On either side of the portico, the covered ramps carry rows of shops. The engineering of the bridge was considered so audacious that architect [Vincenzo Scamozzi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vincenzo_Scamozzi) predicted future ruin. The bridge has defied its critics to become one of the architectural icons, and top tourist attractions, in Venice.[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rialto_Bridge#cite_note-5)

Other names[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Rialto_Bridge&action=edit&section=2" \o "Edit section: Other names)]

It was called [*Shylock*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shylock)*'s bridge* in [Robert Browning](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Browning)'s poem "[A Toccata of Galuppi's](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Toccata_of_Galuppi%27s)".

10 INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THE RIALTO BRIDGE

The *Rialto Bridge* has a long history and it has seen various stages of development of Venice. Here are 10 interesting facts about this magnificent and popular bridge.

#1 IT IS THE OLDEST BRIDGE ACROSS THE GRAND CANAL

The Grand Canal in Venice is *3800m long* and makes *a large reverse S shape* through the central districts in Venice. Until *Accademia Bridge* was constructed in 1854, Rialto Bridge was the only place through which one could cross the canal on foot. Rialto Bridge is built on the narrowest point across the canal and connects the districts of San Polo and San Marco. As of today it is one among the four bridges across the Grand Canal.

The Reverse S Shaped Grand Canal in Venice

#2 RIALTO BRIDGE WAS BUILT TO PROVIDE ACCESS TO THE RIALTO

For centuries the Rialto has been the primary financial and commercial center of Venice. It was in 1097 that the Rialto became an important district as Venice’s market moved there. To provide access to it a floating bridge was built which was called *Ponte della Moneta*. Due to increased traffic, it was replaced by a wooden bridge in 1264. Connection with the Rialto soon changed its name to Rialto Bridge or *Ponte di Rialto*.

A 1912 painting of the Rialto and the bridge by Maurice Prendergast

#3 THE HISTORY OF RIALTO BRIDGE IS FULL OF COLLAPSES

In *1310*, there was an unsuccessful revolt to overthrow the Venetian council which was led by *Bajamonte Tiepolo*. Rialto Bridge was burnt while the rebels were retreating. In *1444*, a crowd was watching a boat parade from the bridge during the wedding of marquis Ferrara and it collapsed under their weight. It collapsed again in *1524* for the *final time.*

#4 THE PRESENT RIALTO BRIDGE IS BUILT OF MARBLE

Due to frequent collapses, it was decided to build the Rialto Bridge in stone and a competition was held for its design. Beginning in 1524, many famous artists and architects, including Michelangelo, submitted designs for the bridge. Ultimately in 1588, the commission was awarded to *Swiss engineer Antonio da Ponte* who built the bridge in marble.

#5 THERE IS A BLOOD-RELATION BETWEEN THE TWO MOST FAMOUS BRIDGES IN VENICE

It is interesting to note that Antonio da Ponte was the uncle of another famous Antonio: *Antonio Contino*, the architect of Venice’s second most talked about bridge – *The Bridge of Sighs*.

#6 THE PRESENT RIALTO BRIDGE IS SIMILAR IN DESIGN TO ITS WOODEN PREDECESSOR

Da Ponte’s design of the marble structure has two sloped ramps leading to a central portico to allow the passage of tall ships. The design of the wooden bridge had two inclined ramps which met at a central section which was movable and could be raised to allow ships to pass through.

#7 IT WAS THOUGHT THAT THE BRIDGE WOULDN’T LAST LONG

Rialto Bridge is a *single span bridge*, i.e., it is anchored at each end with no support in the middle. The engineering of the bridge was considered very audacious and it was thought that it would crumble but it has silenced all its critics and is now considered an *architectural marvel* and an *engineering achievement of the Renaissance period*.

The Rialto Bridge has stood the test of times

#8 IT TOOK THREE YEARS TO CONSTRUCT THE RIALTO BRIDGE

The construction of the present Rialto Bridge took three years because of unstable conditions. Funds needed for it came from various sources including a variation of a lottery. The Rialto Bridge was *completed in 1591*. It is *75 feet wide with the arch height of 24 feet and its longest span is over 94 feet long*.

The Magnificent Rialto Bridge in fading light

#9 IT HAS INSPIRED MANY ARTISTS

Rialto Bridge appears in many paintings with the most famous one being *Miracle of the Relic of the Cross at the Ponte di Rialto* by Italian Renaissance artist *Vittore Carpaccio.* The painting dates back to 1496, the time when the bridge was still in wood.

Miracle of the Relic of the Cross at the Ponte di Rialto by Vittore Carpaccio

#10 IT IS LADEN WITH SHOPS AND IT IS ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR TOURIST SPOTS IN VENICE

The Rialto bridge has three paths: one wide central walkway which has shops on its either sides and two along the railings of the bridge. The capacity of the bridge pleased the business-minded Venetians which was one of the reasons for choosing Da Ponte’s design. The stone reliefs on the bridge depict the city’s patron saints St. Mark and St. Theodore and the Annuciation. Along with St Mark’s Square, Rialto Bridge is the most visited tourist spot in Venice.

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| **Rialto Bridge**  ***Ponte di Rialto*** | |
| [Ponte di Rialto, Canal Grande.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ponte_di_Rialto,_Canal_Grande.jpg)  The Rialto Bridge | |
| [**Coordinates**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geographic_coordinate_system) | https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/55/WMA_button2b.png/17px-WMA_button2b.png[45.4380°N 12.3360°E](https://geohack.toolforge.org/geohack.php?pagename=Rialto_Bridge&params=45.4380_N_12.3360_E_region:IT-34_type:landmark)[Coordinates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geographic_coordinate_system): https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/55/WMA_button2b.png/17px-WMA_button2b.png[45.4380°N 12.3360°E](https://geohack.toolforge.org/geohack.php?pagename=Rialto_Bridge&params=45.4380_N_12.3360_E_region:IT-34_type:landmark) |
| **Carries** | pedestrian bridge[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rialto_Bridge#cite_note-fulton-1) |
| **Crosses** | [Grand Canal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Canal_(Venice)) |
| **Locale** | [Venice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venice), [Veneto](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veneto), [Italy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italy) |
| **Characteristics** | |
| **Design** | stone [arch bridge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arch_bridge) |
| **Width** | 22.90 metres (75.1 ft)[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rialto_Bridge#cite_note-structurae-2) |
| **Height** | 7.32 metres (24.0 ft) (arch only) |
| **Longest span** | 31.80 metres (104.3 ft) |
| **History** | |
| **Construction start** | 1588 |
| **Construction end** | 1591 |
| **Location** | |
| [[https://maps.wikimedia.org/img/osm-intl,12,45.438,12.336,270x200.png?lang=en&domain=en.wikipedia.org&title=Rialto+Bridge&groups=_5ea436a544a97af352a5a615b8d39712a020f53b](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rialto_Bridge#/map/0)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rialto_Bridge" \l "/map/0)  [Wikimedia](https://foundation.wikimedia.org/wiki/Maps_Terms_of_Use) | © [OpenStreetMap](https://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright) | |
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