



## Acqua Alta

**THE WATER FILLING SAN MARCO WAS WARM AND CLEAR.** Tourists, identifiable by their selfie sticks and sneakers, began to frolic, enjoying the photographic novelty of the balcony lights reflected in the shallow water. San Marco, though stunning during the day, takes on an otherworldly appearance at night. It becomes a place outside of time where women in gowns stroll past men in extravagant masks, and tourists gawk and dream. Though I, too, could not help but want to savor this remarkable moment, I couldn't help but remember a conversation I had had with a Venetian student.

"I hate when tourists play in the flood waters," she told me. "Don't they understand what it means?" The spectacular scene before me was born in part out of environmental degradation that started with Napoleon, when natural sandbars were removed allowing larger ships into port, and expanded to include the catastrophic effects of massive cruise ships and unsustainable tourism numbers—22 million per year in a city of less than 60,000 inhabitants. I lowered my camera and offered a private moment of silence to mourn all the unique architecture, landscapes, and whole cultures that will be lost if environmental sustainability continues to be a minor consideration in international travel.

**SARA EDE**

MA candidate, Modern European Studies  
Columbia University

**YOU'RE INVITED!** We invite you to submit your photos along with a brief (approximately 200 words) description of why these images are important in your understanding of a person, place, idea, or incident from your experiences in international education. The photos could be of a simple moment on your home campus involving international students, a major event in an exotic location, or anything in between. The editors of *International Educator* will run selections on this page throughout the year. Please contact us for submission details at [magazine@nafsa.org](mailto:magazine@nafsa.org).