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Peer reviewed

Review: The Science of Saving Venice

By Caroline Fletcher and Jane Da Mosto

Reviewed by [Ryder W. Miller](#)
San Francisco, USA

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Caroline Fletcher and Jane Da Mosto. *The Science of Saving Venice*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006. 94pp. ISBN: 88-422-1310-1. US\$15.00.

Venice is in trouble. Unless substantial efforts are made to control flooding and barriers are built to divert the seawater from the city, the city will face a crisis in this century. As an "outstanding example of wetland biodiversity" and of mankind's success in battling the elements, Venice is a case study of how mankind has learned to live with the sea and the tides and of how coastal cities can react to rising sea levels caused by global warming.

The Science of Saving Venice is not technical and can satisfy the lay reader. There are wonderful photographs, and heartfelt and hopeful writing. This slim volume quickly acquaints the reader with the problems that Venice faces. The photos and drawings give the reader a sense of the place and the diagrams show in detail the work that needs to be accomplished. The rising waters in Venice's case are also likely to cover the city's architectural wonders.

The six chapters of the book include "Crisis," "Setting," "Flooding," "Remedies," "Barriers," and "Futures." Science is playing a vital role in helping Venice make engineering plans for the future, and scientists have determined: "The consensus is that the only feasible way to stop the rising waters from overwhelming the city again [like in the flooding disaster of 1966] is to provide a physical separation from the sea" (Page 59). The authors provide examples of lessons that Venice can learn elsewhere.

A UNESCO World Heritage Site, Venice is the concern of the world and can be a global trendsetter for other coastal cities around the planet. Venice with a rich heritage, can be a model for the future: "Venice has the potential to be a powerful case study in sustainable social and economic development, leading the world in learning to live with natural systems in more harmonious ways, rather than trying to dominate them. The scientific community recognizes that the answers they can provide are only part of the final equation. But theirs remains a vital voice" (Page 81).

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Ryder W. Miller, Freelance environmental and science reporter who has been published in Sierra Magazine, California Coast & Ocean, California Wild, and Hydrosphere.