The Lagoon Guardians

Venice offers a unique experience in terms of landscape and environment, and for this reason, it has been nominated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

In the last decades, various organizations promoting sustainability in Venice have been set up to create an integrated model of sustainable development for the city and its metropolitan area. Such models revitalize the local economy while granting at the same time the protection and preservation of the environmental, historical and cultural heritage, along with the strengthening and the cohesion of the local community.

Every spring our school takes part in a project to clean the beaches from trash to save the delicate ecosystem of the lagoon. This activity helps the flora and fauna in the protected oasis of Ca' Roman to make it more sustainable. Ca' Roman is an island in the Venice lagoon, situated between Pellestrina and Chioggia, characterised by an uncontaminated environment with a rich biodiversity. It is a site of community interest managed by the LIPU and the Regional Forestry Services for the protection of rare and important habitats for the nesting and passage of many species of birds (190 species recorded). Ca' Roman represents a testimony to the recent geological history of the lagoon and a rare example of an upper Adriatic coast not altered by man for bathing purposes. Since 2006 it has also been a place of environmental education, taken by our school as an open sky laboratory site for biochemistry studies.

The activities are divided into waste collection and water analysis. Each activity is followed by an expert guide and chemistry teachers, who explain how to collect trash and how to conduct analysis. Not only is it important to collect trash properly, but also to divide the waste types, e.g. plastic, glass, tins, syringes, nets, pieces of clothes or bottle caps.

As far as the water analysis is concerned, our school conducted a microbiological study on the water collected. The results were interesting to understand the actual risks that our lagoon is exposed to and what we can do to reduce them.

In conclusion, this initiative is recommended as a useful activity to be carried out across schools and in other areas of the Venetian islands. A further sustainable idea could be starting awareness campaigns for tourists and residents and developing a system of incentives for proper disposal of waste, such as *"Green credits*" usable for local services or discounts on public transport. This strategy could be reported as a sustainable topic in schools, emphasising the negotiation on "*give and take*".

Another suggestion would be organising a "*waste hunt*" that could encourage both recycling and group work. The waste collectors would be divided into teams and each of them would be provided with a bag and an area to clean. At the end of the activity, the bags are weighed and the group that has the heaviest bag will receive a prize.