

Amazon founder Bezos and company flaunt their wealth in Venice

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Significant protests are taking place in the famed northern Italian city of Venice directed against the marriage of Amazon founder Jeff Bezos to the former US television news anchor and “media personality” Lauren Sanchez. In fact, according to various sources, the event threatens to become a “fiasco.”

On June 7-8, a group of activists hung a banner from the bell tower of San Giorgio Basilica, on the Venetian island of the same name, with a red X covering Bezos' name. Playing on the billionaire's role as head of the Blue Origin space technology company, protesters have proclaimed, in posters put up around the city, there is “No Space for Bezos” in Venice. In order to avoid opposition, Bezos has been forced to make an alteration to his original plans and has chosen an alternative, more secluded venue in Venice for his nuptials.

Indeed, according to British columnist Rob Shuter,

What was supposed to be *the wedding of the century* is devolving into a luxury fiasco with a very public price tag. ... Jeff Bezos and Lauren Sánchez's ultra-exclusive, three-day wedding celebration in Venice is rapidly turning from “romance in the Renaissance” to “disaster on the Grand Canal.” With furious protesters taking over the city, VIP guests quietly backing out, and logistical headaches mounting by the hour, insiders say the couple's dream day is becoming a PR nightmare.

Thoroughly deserved, to say the least.

Bezos' marriage to Sanchez is an ultra-luxurious event for a super-rich elite spanning several days. The canal-dominated city is closed off to autos, meaning that the invited guests, arriving in over 90 jet planes, will be transported primarily by boat and helicopter. This requires the renting of numerous yacht moorings, helicopter pads and the virtual takeover of the city's central municipal transport for the duration of the event.

Bezos' \$500-million-yacht “Koru” (sleeps 45)—accompanied by his smaller, “support” yacht “L'Abeona” (\$80 million and houses his staff and “water toys”)—is already docked. The world's third-richest individual and his bride-to-be were spotted arriving in Venice Wednesday afternoon.

A small army of former marines are on hand to provide security and escort the couple and an estimated 200 guests for the short distances they are expected to walk between hotels and restaurants.

Venice's most luxurious hotels have opened their doors to the guests, including the Gritti Palace, Hotel Cipriani and Aman, where rooms cost between \$2,000 and \$4,000 a night.

CBS News explained that “Luca Zaia, president of the Veneto regional government that comprises Venice, told reporters on Tuesday” the three-day event “could cost between about \$64 million to \$76 million.”

(Rough calculations suggest that \$75 million could cover the grocery costs for roughly 6.27 million people in the US for one day. Taking into account that a single-person household spent an average of \$5,235 on food in 2022, \$75 million could feed approximately 14,326 Americans for a year.)

Invitations have gone out to Donald Trump's daughter Ivanka and son-in-law Jared Kushner (who have already arrived in Venice). Other guests expected include Lauren Sanchez's fellow Blue Origin astronauts Katy Perry and Gayle King (whose recent flight into space lasted just 11 minutes), as well as celebrities such as Oprah Winfrey, Barbra Streisand, Bill Gates, Eva Longoria, Kris Jenner, Kim Kardashian, Leonardo DiCaprio etc., etc. A who's who of international big money banality and emptiness.

Venice residents have long complained of the combined effect of vast numbers of tourists, soaring property prices and the growing danger of the city slipping into the sea due to the climate crisis. Now many have expressed their opposition to this latest provocation. Other posters plastered around the city read: “Venice is not for sale, rent, or your

Instagram backdrop.” The city’s authorities have been accused of transforming Venice into a picturesque playground for the ultra-rich, while its year-round residents (approximately 50,000 in number) are being increasingly pushed out.

Bezos’ personal fortune is estimated to be around \$220 billion. Among the posters and banners currently on display in Venice, one huge display featuring his grinning face declares: “If you can rent Venice for your wedding you can pay more tax.”

Along with other members of the rapidly growing club of US billionaires, Bezos, Amazon CEO Andrew Jassy and other Amazon major stock holders all profited handsomely from the tax cuts introduced by Trump in his first term.

According to a recent report issued by the Institute for Policy Studies:

Top Amazon executives have received huge tax windfalls from the 2017 (Trump) tax reform and stand to reap even bigger windfalls from the new tax legislation Congress is currently crafting.

The main source of income for oligarchs such as Bezos comes in the form of the soaring stock values of their company’s shares, subject to a capital gains tax of only 20 percent. This compares to the top rate on earned income of 37 percent and means that nurses, teachers, auto workers and Amazon workers - half of whom made less than \$37,181 in 2024 - are paying a bigger percentage of tax on their incomes than the super-rich.

The Institute for Policy Studies points out that Amazon’s Jassy

contributed just 0.4 percent of his taxable pay to Social Security last year. As a share of compensation, the company’s median-paid worker contributed 6.2 percent — 15 times as much as Jassy.

Along with fellow oligarchs such as Mark Zuckerberg, Sundar Pichai and Elon Musk, Bezos paid homage to the court of Donald Trump after the latter’s re-election in November. In February this year Bezos sent out an email to all the employees of the *Washington Post*, which he purchased in 2013. In the email, Bezos

decreed that the newspaper’s editorial pages must

be adapted to the agenda of the Trump administration and the interests of the capitalist oligarchy. (WSWS)

He asserted: “We are going to be writing every day in support and defense of two pillars: personal liberties and free markets.”

Bezos was subsequently awarded a lucrative \$2.3 billion government contract in April for Blue Origin. In exchange Bezos, pledged to help Trump’s plans to ‘reduce regulation’ — including the abolition of worker protection agencies, thereby further imperilling the low-income workforce at Amazon.

The cabal of billionaires and multi-millionaires who fill the seats of Trump’s cabinet are determined to step up the pace of personal wealth accumulation. In a report earlier this year, Oxfam noted that fortunes of the ultra-rich were growing “at an unimaginable pace.” In 2024, the wealth of billionaires surged at triple the rate of the year before and, according to Oxfam, the world is on course for at least five trillionaires within a decade. Meanwhile, worldwide 333 million children are trapped in extreme poverty and nearly a billion have no basic access to clean water, decent food or education.

In the midst of all this, Bezos flaunts his wealth in Venice. As the world confronts world war, the re-emergence of fascist authoritarians and climate catastrophe, the nonchalance and arrogance of today’s insatiable and grasping super-rich, epitomised by Bezos and his entourage, recalls the withering indictment of the rich in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*. The wealthy, wrote Fitzgerald, “smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made. ...”

The latest nauseating display of oligarch wealth in Venice only serves to underline that the world’s working population can no longer afford the ultra-rich.



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