Serenissima

A game by Dominique Ehrhardt – Artwork by D. Ehrhardt – Cover by Arnaud Demaegd

Game rules

Take control of a 15th century Mediterranean nation.

Send your galleys full of soldiers and goods to conquer the waves. Seize the most strategic positions and fill your warehouses to amass a veritable fortune which will make your empire the most prosperous and feared.

Object of the Game

The players take the role of merchants from the greatest cities of the Mediterranean region in the 15th century. Through commerce and conflict, they attempt to spread their domination over this part of the world. At the end of the game, the richest player is the winner.

Setup

(4 players)

Note: before your first game, carefully stick the numbered stickers on the forward bridge of the 15 galleys.

The game board is placed in the center of the table. The galleys, the fort and basilica tokens, the goods cubes, the ducats, and the Port cards are placed next to the board.

The white token is placed at the beginning of the 4 player turn track (A).

The Galley cubes are placed close to the wheel, . The black token is placed on the wheel, on the Doge space (B).

The 5 Doge cards are shuffled and placed face-down on the left-hand side of the Venetian lion (C). The right-hand side of the Venetian lion will be used to discard these cards, face up.

A player is randomly chosen as first player. Each player chooses a color and takes **22 sailors** of that color and **5 ducats**. Each player chooses, clockwise starting with the first player, a starting port from the 5 available (G) as well as a galley. As soon as a galley is chosen, a Galley cube of the player's color is placed on the wheel next to the number corresponding to the galley (thus showing that the galley is in play). The player places 3 sailors on their starting port and 3 more sailors in their galley. The galley is placed in the sea zone adjacent to the port chosen by the player.

Once the player has placed his or her galley, a second turn of galley selection is done. This second turn is made counterclockwise, starting with the last player. For each player, the new galley is placed next to the first one, with 3 sailors on board.

Note: the Ducats included with the game have both a visible side and a "blank" side. The players should decide together whether they want to play with visible money or hidden money. Depending on their choice, they place the coins they earn face up or down.

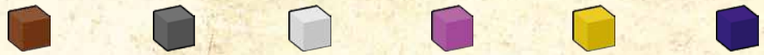
Box Contents

15 galleys

1 sticker sheet

120 Sailor tokens (30 for each player)

24 Galley cubes (6 for each player)

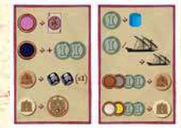


14 Wood cubes | 12 Stone cubes | 12 Marble cubes | 12 Wine cubes | 10 Gold cubes | 10 Spice cubes

54 coins (1, 5, 10 & 50 Ducats)

19 Port cards

5 Doge cards



4 Game Help cards

4 Closed cards

5 Basilica tokens

5 Fort tokens

5 special die

1 White token & 1 Black token

1 game board

A) Turn track (start for 4 players)
B) Wheel (Doge square)
C) Doge cards square
D) Port
E) Good produced by the port (Marble)
F) Port's Warehouse
G) Starting Ports

Game Overview

(4 players)

The game is played over a series of turns (between 5 and 11 with 4 players). A turn corresponds to the activation of all galleys in play followed by the drawing of a Doge card. After this draw, scoring will sometimes occur.

Game Turn

The Black token is moved clockwise on the first space of the wheel with a Galley cube. This galley becomes the active galley. Its owner has two choices: **Action** or **Investment.**

A) Action

The owner of the galley uses it. The action phase is divided into 3 steps (Loading / Movement / Sale or Battle). These steps are all optional and a player may perform one, two, or all three steps, but they must all be performed in the order given (first Loading, then Movement, then finally Sale or Battle).

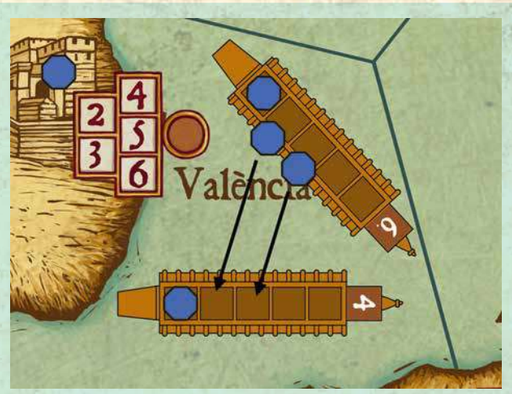
1) Loading: during this step, the owner of the galley may, starting in its current port, load sailors or goods cubes on board. Each galley has 5 spaces on which **sailors** or **goods** may be stored.

Sailors: the owner of the galley can manage the sailors in the port where the active galley is depending on their need.

If the port is **under their control** (meaning that sailors belonging to them are stationed there), they can thus load sailors from the port or any other galley belonging to them present in that port onto the active galley. They can also unload sailors from the active galley to the port or another of their galleys.

If the port is **neutral** (no sailors) or **under the control of another player,** they can move sailors between the active galley and another galley belonging to them in this area (move both ways), but cannot place sailors on the port.

Limitations: : A galley can contain up to 5 sailors and must contain at least 1 sailor. A galley without a sailor has "sunk" and is therefore no longer available for the player. It is returned next to the game board and the corresponding Galley cube is removed from the wheel. A player is allowed to voluntarily sink one of their galleys. The maximum number of sailors a port can contain is equal to the size of its warehouse. For example, València has a warehouse of 5 spaces and can thus contain at most 5 sailors. Finally, it isn't possible to abandon a port by loading all sailors from that port unto a galley – at least 1 sailor must remain.



Example: galley 4, currently stationed in València and containing 1 sailor, is active. Blue, its owner, decides to make it act. He transfers 2 sailors from galley 6 (which belongs to him and is also currently stationed in València). However, he can't take the sailor from València, as it's the only one present in the port. He could also have transferred the sailor from galley 4 to València or galley 6, but in that case galley 4 would have sunk.

Goods: the owner of the galley can load goods of the type produced by the port onto his or her active galley.

If the port is under their control, they can load a goods cube of the type produced by the port onto their galley for free. If they wish to load extra cubes, they will have to pay for these goods at the price of 1 ducat per cube to the bank.

If the port is neutral (no sailors present), they can load as many cubes of the type of goods produced by the port as they wish by paying the price of 1 ducat per cube to the bank.

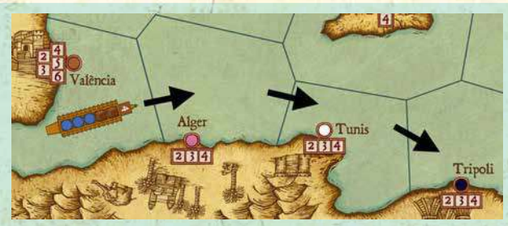
If the port belongs to another player, they can load as many cubes of the goods produced by the port as they wish by paying 1 ducat per cube to the player who owns the port.

The active player is also allowed to move goods to or from other galleys belonging to them and on the same zone as the active galley. This action is free.

Limitations: A galley can contain up to 4 goods cubes (since at least 1 sailor must be present). During this phase, a player may decide to toss goods overboard to make space for more goods or sailors.

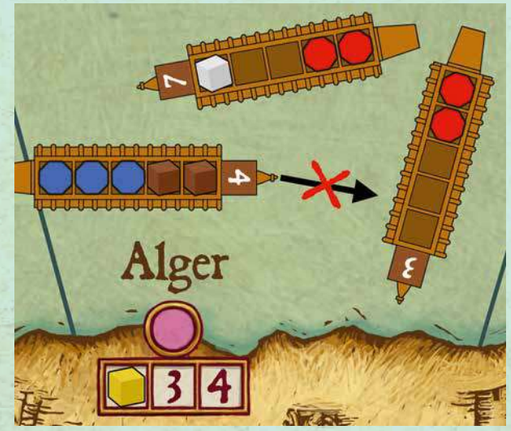
Example (cont'd): Blue now loads goods onto galley 4. As València produces wood, he decides to load 2 wood. To do that, he pays 1 Ducat (since the first cube is free as he owns the port).

2) Movement: during this step, the player can move the active galley on the game board. The amount of movement of a galley is determined by the number of sailors on board. For each sailor present, the player can move the galley one space.



Example (cont'd): Blue moves galley 4. Since it carries 3 sailors, he can move it up to 3 spaces. He therefore decides to head towards Tripoli.

Blockade during movement: Blockade during movement: if, during movement, the active galley enters a space in which another player has more sailors on galleys than those on the active galley (sailors present in a port do not count), that player may declare a blockade. The galley then stops its movement on the current space and moves on to step 3 (Sale or Battle). A blockade **cannot involve a galley's starting space.** Thus, a galley can always take its loading action and leave the space on which it begins its turn. If a player ends up in a space where multiple players can declare a blockade, the player with the most sailors decides first whether or not to blockade (in case of a tie, the player with the galley with the smallest number). A player can ask another player their intention before entering a space, but no player is bound to their word! Trading goods or ducats between players isn't allowed.



Example (cont'd): during his movement towards Tripoli, Blue meets 2 of Red's galleys who are in Algiers. As each of Red's galleys contain 2 sailors, she therefore has 4 sailors (a superior number to Blue's 3 sailors) and declares a blockade. The blue galley thus stops moving on this space.

3) Sale or Battle: during this step the player can use their galley to either sell goods, do battle, whether to conquer a port (neutral or belonging to another player) or to attack one or more galleys.

a) Sale: the player can sell **one or more goods** from the active galley in the port to which they have moved the galley. The type of goods sold **cannot be produced by the port or already be present in the port's warehouse.** Each type of goods can only be sold **once** in any port. For each good sold, the player places the cube on the warehouse space of least value and then the player gets money from the bank.

If the port **belongs to them**, the player gets nothing.

If the port is **neutral or belongs to another player**, the player gets a number of ducats equal to the value of the space in which the goods is placed (from 2 to 6).

Spice: if the player sells spice (violet cubes), they get a bonus of 2 ducats (the sale of spice is thus worth 2 ducats in a player's own ports or 4 to 8 ducats in other ports).

Wine: Port cards have 2 faces, a neutral face and a wine face. By default, the neutral side is visible. As soon as a port has wine in its warehouse, its owner **flips its card to the wine side**, which will be used at the end of certain turns. *Note: The ports producing wine have no neutral side.*

Blockade during a sale: Blockade during a sale: the blockade rules apply to sales. Thus, a player with more sailors on their galleys than there are on the active galley can declare a blockade to prevent a sale. The player suffering the blockade can then decide to enter battle with the galley(s) causing the blockade (see further) or end their turn.

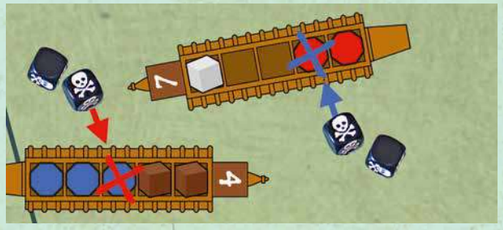
Example (cont'd): Blue, as he can't go further, decides to sell 1 cube of wood in Algiers. Here again, Red declares a blockade and the sale cannot be completed. Blue must decide to end his turn or enter battle.

b) Battle: the player can attempt to attack one or more galleys in the area in which their galley has arrived. They can also conquer the port in the area where their galley has arrived.

Battle against a galley: to begin, the owner of the active galley (who will be the attacker) determines their **combat value**: this is equal to the number of sailors present on the galley minus the number of spaces crossed by said galley. For the owner of the attacked galley (who will be the defender) the combat value is equal to the number of sailors present on the galley. The battle is resolved by **simultaneous die rolls.**

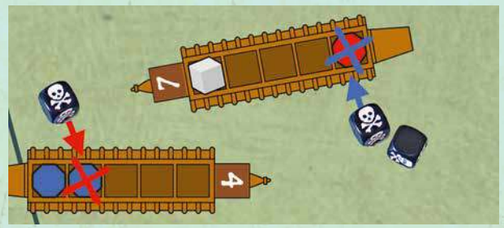
First round of battle: Each player rolls as many dice as their combat value and inflicts on the opposing side as many deaths as there are "skull" symbols

showing on their dice. The sailors thus killed return to the player's reserves.



Example (cont'd): Blue decides to enter battle. From among Red's two galleys, he decides to attack galley 7 first. Blue's combat value is 2 (3 sailors minus 1 as the galley has moved one space). Red's combat value is 2 (2 sailors). The two players roll the dice and each obtains 1 skull. They thus both inflict one casualty on their opponent's sailors.

Subsequent rounds: between each roll, the attacker can decide to stop the battle. In that case, the battle ends and the player's turn ends. If the attacker decides to continue, the players determine their new combat value and proceed as they did in the first turn. If the attacker has not lost any sailors, his combat value does not change. If he has lost sailors, then his new combat value is equal to the number of sailors on the galley, but can never go higher than the original combat value. The defender's combat value is equal to the number of sailors present on the galley.



Example (cont'd): Blue decides to continue the battle. His combat value is still 2 (he's got 2 sailors left). Red's is 1. The two players roll the dice and they both get 1 skull. Blue once again loses 1 sailor and Red's galley is sunk.

End of battle: As soon as one of the two sides no longer has sailors, the battle ends. If it's the attacker, their galley is "sunk" and is placed next to the game board (the corresponding Galley cube is removed from the wheel). If it's the defender, the same thing occurs. The owner of the surviving galley can, if they so desire, claim goods from the sunken galley if there's enough space to stock them in their galley (sailors cannot be thrown overboard to make space for goods).

Example (end): Red's galley sinks. Blue decides to claim the cube of marble and places it on his galley. If he wishes to do so, he could continue the battle against the remaining galley and eventually attack the port. His combat value is now 1 and he thus decides to stop.

Combat against multiple galleys: when entering an area where there are multiple galleys, the active galley can fight them one at a time (even if they belong to different players). They choose one galley from among those present in the space and proceed as indicated above. At the end of combat, the player can decide to end their turn or enter battle with another galley.

Combat against a port: the sequence of battle depends on the owner of the port.

- If the port is **neutral** (no sailors present), the owner of the active galley can simply claim the port by unloading 1 or more sailors into it. If there's only one sailor on their galley, the sailor can still be unloaded and the galley is sunk. The corresponding Port card is taken from the reserve and placed in front of the player. It's possible to claim a neutral port even if a galley belonging to another player is on the space (unless there's a blockade).

Example: galley 8 is the active galley. Orange has just moved to Napoli. She has a cube of wood but she would rather claim the port.
Since the port is neutral all she needs to do is drop off a sailor to claim it (though she could leave more). Black, who is stationed in Napoli can't stop her with a blockade as his galley only contains 3 sailors (like galley 8). Orange thus takes the Napoli card and places it in front of her.

- If the port **belongs to someone else**, the owner of the active galley will have to fight. If the space also contains galley belonging to the port's owner, the owner of the active galley will first have to enter battle with these galleys before attacking the port (no need to fight the galleys which may be present in the space which belong to other players. Those players cannot declare a blockade). The rules for fighting a port are the same as with a galley, unless the port contains a fort (see further). At the end of the battle, the owner of the active galley can unload sailors to take control of the port. If there is only one sailor left on their galley, they can unload the sailor and sink the galley. That player now takes the Port card from the defender and is now the new owner of the port. In some cases, the two sides will kill each other off. The port then becomes neutral once again (the Port card is returned to the reserve next to the game board).

Forts: If the attacked port contains a Fort (see Investment), it will take part in the battle. Before the beginning of the combat against the port, the owner of the Fort rolls two dice and inflicts as many victims to the active galley as "skulls" rolled. The Fort is not used again (it is only used once, at the beginning of the battle against the port), but remains in place after being built no matter what. A Fort cannot fire on a galley making a sale

Blockade and battle: a player can declare a blockade to prevent another player to conquer a neutral port. A player suffering a blockade can either end their turn, or they can enter battle with the galley(s) blockading them before conquering the neutral port. Their turn is then finished (and thus they cannot resume a sale or a move).

Player's last port: if a player only has one port left, the other players are not allowed to conquer it.

B) Investment

Instead of using the active galley, the player can make investments in their empire. They can buy elements in all of their ports

- ***Recruit sailors:*** each recruited sailor costs 1 ducat. The player can place sailors in all their ports as long as they respect the port's capacity limit. They can also place sailors on their galleys currently stationed in ports they own (but not in ports not belonging to them).

- ***Galley:*** a player can only buy one new galley per investment phase. Buying a new galley costs 1 ducat for each galley already owned. The new galley can only be placed in a port belonging to the player.

- ***Fort:*** buying a fort costs 2 ducats. The fort can only be placed in a port containing wood and stone (whether these are produced and /or present in the warehouse). The wood and stone goods cubes aren't discarded. A port can contain only one Fort.

- ***Basilica:*** buying a basilica costs 2 ducats. The basilica can only be placed in a port containing gold and marble (whether these are produced and / or present in the warehouse). The wood and marble goods cubes aren't discarded. A port can contain only one Basilica.

Example: galley 9 is active, but Black decides not to use it and makes investments. He buys 5 sailors, 1 for Constantinople, 1 for Antakya, and 3 for galley 12 (stationed in one of his cities) which he owns. He can't buy an additional sailor at Antakya, as the port can only hold 3 sailors. He also buys a basilica for Antakya as the port produces gold and contains marble. In total, he therefore pays 7 ducats (1 per sailor and 2 for the basilica). His turn is now over.

End of the Turn

When all the galleys have been activated, the black token is moved to the Doge space. A Doge card is then drawn. Depending on the card drawn, the white token is moved forward on the turn track.

- ***"Wine" card:*** the white token doesn't move. Each player gains 3 ducats for each of their ports containing or producing wine. The card is then discarded face up.

- ***"1 Hourglass" card (*2):*** the white token is moved forward one space. If the white token reaches a scoring space (yellow space) scoring occurs (see further). The card is discarded face up.

- ***"2 Hourglass" card:*** the white token is moved forward two spaces. If the white token reaches or passes a scoring space (yellow space) scoring occurs (see further). The card is discarded face up.

- ***"2 Hourglass + Shuffle" Card:*** the white token is moved forward two spaces. If the white token reaches or passes a scoring space (yellow space) scoring occurs (see further). The discarded Doge cards and the remaining Doge cards are then reshuffled and replaced face down on the left side of the Venetian lion.

Players with less than 2 galleys: after the card is drawn and any possible scoring (see below) the players who own less than 2 galleys are allowed to take a special investment phase. They can spend their ducats to buy galleys and sailors (at the price indicated in the "Investment" section) in order to own 2 galleys at the beginning of the next turn.

Example: the turn is over and a doge card is drawn. It's the card with 2 hourglasses. The white token is moved forward 2 spaces. As it passes a scoring space, scoring occurs before the next turn. If a player has less than 2 galleys, that player will be able to buy some after scoring is resolved.

Scoring

When the white token reaches or passes a scoring space on the turn track, scoring occurs. Each player gains ducats following this scale:

- Each port grants a number of ducats depending on how filled the warehouse is (between 0 for an empty warehouse and 20 for a completely filled large port).

- Each basilica grants 5 ducats.

Note: even if the players play with hidden money, they must announce to their opponents how much money they earn when scoring.

Example: València's warehouse contains 4 cubes and a basilica. For that port, Blue gains 20 Ducats (15 for the warehouse and 5 for the basilica). He does the same for each his cities and announces the total to the other players.

End of the game

The game ends after the third scoring occurs. The richest player wins the game. In case of a tie, the tied player with the most Port cards wins.

Variants

Serenissima with 3 players

The game is identical to the 4 player version with a few changes:

- The players use 26 sailors instead of 22.
- The players use 12 galleys instead of 15 (galleys 13 to 15 are left in the box).
- The white token is placed at the beginning of the turn track for 2 or 3 players (red space). Scoring will only take place when the white token reaches or passes red spaces as well as the last space.
- Before the beginning of the game, players close a port producing wood, a port producing wine, a port producing stone and a port producing marble. The closing of these ports is indicated by placing a Closed card on the port. The closed areas can be crossed, but no commerce can take place there.

Serenissima with 2 players

The game is identical to the 4 player version with a few changes:

- The players use 30 sailors instead of 22.
- The players use 12 galleys instead of 15 (galleys 13 to 15 are thus left in the box).
- The white token is placed at the beginning of the turn track for 2 or 3 players (red space). Scoring will only take place when the white token reaches or passes red spaces as well as the last space.
- Before the beginning of the game, players close a port producing wood, a port producing wine, a port producing stone and a port producing marble. The closing of these ports is indicated by placing a Closed card on the port. The closed areas can be crossed, but no commerce can take place there.
- The players start the game with 3 galleys (chosen in an alternate fashion) instead of 2. Each galley as well as the starting port contains 3 sailors.

Notes from the author

- In the glorious era of the Serenissima, commerce and the struggle for influence were tightly bound. These battles were in no case wars of conquest or called upon the extermination of the opponent. They were above all a question of strengthening privileges and commercial monopolies. Today's opponent could very well become tomorrow's client. And in many cases, Venice would continue to trade with cities or countries with which it was in conflict elsewhere.
- Contrary to a widespread belief, the rowers on board Venetian galleys were neither slaves nor prisoners, but free citizens who were serving depending on need, both sailors and soldiers. Often they were even family members of the galley's sponsor who would ensure the regularity of commercial transactions. This Venetian peculiarity explains the quality and motivation of the galley crews. It was only near the end of the Republic, in its period of military and economic decadence, that it would come to use prisoners and slaves on board of its galleys. It's why sailors in this game are used for both moving the galleys and battle. It's also why moving long distances tire your men out and make them less efficient in combat.
- Players may be surprised that it's the "bank" who pays the players the value of the sold goods and not the player to whom the port belongs to. You must simply consider that the player who owns the port doesn't really own the city or its population, but simply ensures the monopoly of commercial transactions using a military presence. It's the city's population who actually buys the goods.
- The cubes of goods present in ports don't correspond to actual crates of goods but simply mean that a trade route which supplies this city with that good has been made. This is why you cannot "sell" a good already present on a port a second time, or buy a good present on a port but which isn't produced by the port. In the same way, cubes aren't "spent" to make a fort – all that's needed is for the goods to be available in the port, which means that the port is sufficiently supplied with wood and stone to build a fort.