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# FLORENCE



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The artistic and cultural heritage of Florence is among the greatest in the world. UNESCO estimates that 60% of the world's most important artworks are in Italy, with over half of them located in Florence. Positioned at the very centre of the Renaissance, home to some of the greatest artists and thinkers who ever lived (Dante, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Brunelleschi, Botticelli, Vasari...) it seems that Florence could never lose her reputation of city of culture! Its academies, libraries and museums are renown; its religious monuments, churches, civil architecture and buildings are exceptional. A visit to Florence is a must for any art lover!

**ROME AT A GLANCE... - TRANSPORTS - CLASSICS YOU CAN'T MISS! - SHOPPING AND MARKETS**

**EAT AND DRINK - INTERNET CAFE' - EVENTS - OUTSIDE TRIPS - USEFUL INFORMATION - HOTELS AND HOSTELS**

## » FLORENCE AT FIRST GLANCE...

Florence is the capital city of both the Florence Province and the region of Tuscany. Surrounded by the wine-growing hills of Chianti, it is situated 50 metres above sea level and stands on both banks of the river Arno. To the north and north-east the city stretches along the foothills of the Careggi, Fiesole and Settignano hills, to the south along the Arcetri and Belosguardo Hills. Florence dates back to the Pre-Roman age, has a regular urban layout and spans the river with numerous, architecturally splendid bridges.



All the tourist attractions are grouped together in six zones, all of which can be easily visited on foot and represent the Florence historical and geographical fulcrum.

**1. Duomo:** This zone maintains its Medieval atmosphere, with its hive of narrow streets and ancient alleyways. The Santa Maria del Fiore or Duomo, with its baptistery designed by Ghiberti and its bell-tower designed by Giotto, dominates this area. The Orsanmichele, one of



the finest examples of 13th century architecture in the city, is located in Via Calzaiuoli. The Bargello Gallery is situated in via del Proconsolo. The gallery houses a collection of Florentine Renaissance sculptures, with works from Michelangelo, Donatello and Cellini.

**2. Piazza della Signoria,** Palazzo Vecchio, Piazzale and the Uffizi Museum, Ponte Vecchio. The Piazza della Signoria was both the centre of political power and city

life until the era of the city council. This large and sunny square is dominated by the imposing Palazzo Vecchio, which forms the back drop to the Signoria open arched gallery, one of the most important Medieval buildings in Italy. The Ponte Vecchio houses numerous antique and modern jewellery shops. The Piazza della Repubblica, one of the liveliest zones of Florence, is situated a short distance away. This zone is renown for its cafes and shopping area which includes via Vigna Nuova and via de Tornabuoni, both highly elegant, lined with refined shops and important buildings from the 15th to the 18th century. The Palazzo Strozzi is an example of the zone's fine buildings, built in Florentine Renaissance style, it is the seat



of numerous cultural institutions, including Gabinetto G.P. Visseux.

**3. S. Maria Novella** and Museo Marino Marini. This richly varied area around the train station offers the sublime and the sleazy, mixing lovely churches with the usual near-the-station grit. Its most civilized pleasures are near the fine Museum Marino Marini (Piazza S. Pancrazio ph.+39 055 219 432, close Tue, Sat & Sun in summer, Tue & Sun in winter) with its excellent sculptures by Marino Marini (1901-80) and in the piazza Santa Maria Novella and the church of the same name which holds Trinità by Masaccio and Giotto's recently restored Crocifisso.

**4. S. Croce** district: the magnificent Gothic Santa Croce Basilica, in the Santa Croce Square, is a collection of monastic buildings grouped



around cloisters, forming what is

today a museum of paintings and religious sculptures. The basilica houses tombs and cenotaphs by Galileo and Michelangelo, the crucifixions by Donatello and Cimabue, the Pazzi Chapel by Brunelleschi and the Bardi Chapel, with Giotto frescoes.

**5. San Lorenzo and San Marco,** The Medici zone winds its way along via de Martelli, one of the city's main streets, which starts at the passage between the Duomo and the Baptistery. The north zone is the site of the San Lorenzo Basilica, which houses the mortal remains of some of the most illustrious Medici family members. The Palazzo Medici Riccardi, the family's main residence, is situated a short distance away. The roads situated around Piazza San Lorenzo, are bustling with a large and colourful market, which includes the central market, a two-storey building selling fresh food. The zone, which at the time of the Medici, housed the Grand Duke's stables, is now the San Marco district, with its Convent. This district has a young feel, owing to the large presence of students from the University, Conservatory and the Academy of Fine Arts. The block of buildings that begin on the corner of via Ricasoli, is the site of the Academy's Gallery, the

Gem Factory and the Archaeology Museum.

6. the district of **Oltrarno** with the Pitti Place, Santo Spirito, the Boboli Gardens and the Santa Maria del Carmine Church. It is a quiet zone of low buildings, antique shops and work-shops. The area is dominated by the Palazzo Pitti and the intricately shaped hedges of the Boboli Gardens. The zone is the site of Via Maggio and the Piazza di Santo Spirito, both lined



by aristocratic buildings. The Santa Maria del Carmine, situated in the Piazza del Carmine, is famous for its frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel, painted by Masolino and Masaccio.

## » TRANSPORTS

### Getting there: by plane

Airport Amerigo Vespucci is about 3 miles west from central Florence but not many airlines fly there (ph:+39 055 315 874; [www.aeroporto.firenze.it](http://www.aeroporto.firenze.it)). The Pisa's Galileo Airport

(50 miles) is busier and more reliable (ph: +39 050 849 111 or 849 300 for flight information; [www.pisa-airport.com](http://www.pisa-airport.com)). A bus connection (Terravision; [www.terravision.it](http://www.terravision.it)) takes to the Florence S. M. Novella Train Station (ph: +39 055 235 2061) and back again. A return ticket is about €13,50.



Premising that Florence's historical centre is best explored on foot, here provided some info about transports.

### BUS

For outlying sights, bus tickets (€1) are sold at special booths and tabacchi. Tickets can be also bought from ATAF ([www.ataf.net](http://www.ataf.net); ph: 800 424 500) in the station, automatic vending machines and authorized distributors. They are valid for 1 hour after stamping on board. There are various options to save on the price, 3-24 hours, 2-3-7 day travel cards and monthly or yearly bus passes. Eco-friendly small electric buses A, B, C and D cover the central zones

running from Santa Maria Novella Central Station to the centre, calling at Piazza Beccaria, Piazza della Repubblica, Piazza Ferucci and Oltrarno. Bus number 62 goes to the airport; 12 and 13 run to Piazza Michelangelo; number 7 to Fiesole.

### TAXIS

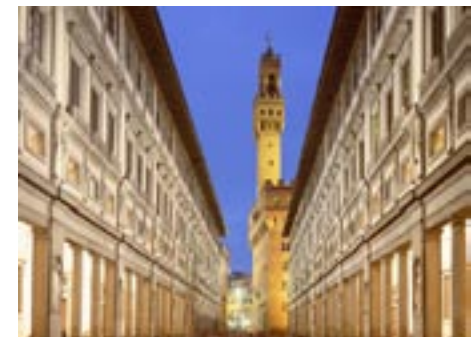
Here's the numbers: +39 055 4390; +39 055 4798

### BYCICLES

It is possible to travel around the city by bike/scooters, a service offered by Florence by Bike (ph: +39 055 488 992), which organizes guided theme tours. Another reliable company for scooters or moped is Alinari (ph: +39 055 280 500).

## » CLASSICS YOU CAN'T MISS!

**The Uffizi Gallery** ([www.uffizi.firenze.it](http://www.uffizi.firenze.it); ph: +39 055 238 8651; +39 055 294 883 to book tickets in advance; bus n.23 or B) with its





entrance under the portico of the Palazzo degli Uffizi 6, is one of the most important art galleries in Italy and the oldest museum in modern Europe.

It houses Italian works of art from all periods, from Medieval to Modern. At the moment, 2,000 individual works are exhibited. The ground floor houses the "Ciclo di Uomini" by Andrea del Castagno (1450) and the "Annunciazione" fresco by Sandro Botticelli (1481). The first large section comprises works from Tuscan Medieval painters from the 12th century to the 14th century including Duccio di Buoninsegna, Cimabue, Giotto, Ambrogio and Pietro Lorenzetti, Masaccio, Masolino, Beato Angelico, Piero

della Francesca, Botticelli ('The birth of Venus' and 'Primavera'), Leonardo ('Annunciazione'), Verrocchio and Perugino. Rooms number 16 to 24 are the oldest rooms in the gallery, in particular room number 18, the octagonal Tribune, which houses classic statues and paintings from 15th century Florence. The other rooms contain paintings from the 14th and 15th century from different schools, together with sculptures including Luca Signorelli, Perugino, Albert Durer, Brueghel il Vecchio, Lucas Cranach il Giovane, Giovanni Bellini and Andrea Mantegna. The first room along the third corridor is dedicated to the Florentine painting of the late Renaissance period including Michelangelo, Raffaello, Andrea del Sarto, Pontorno, Rosso Fiorentino and Bronzino. The rooms dedicated to the Venetian school and works from the Emiliano-Ferrara



and Central Italy regions, follow on and include the works of Tiziano, with an entire room dedicated to his work "Venere di Urbino", Palma il Vecchio, Parmigianino, El Greco and Tintoretto. Rooms 41 to 45 house the works of artists from the 16th and 17th century including Rubens, Van Dyck and Justus Sustermans. The Vasarian Corridor, accessible from the gallery's third corridor, was built in 1565 by Vasari to link the Uffizi to the Pitti Palazzo by means of the Ponte Vecchio. This zone houses works from Italian and foreign artists from the 17th and the 18th century, together with the beginning of the portrait gallery, with works dating back to the 15th century.

Opening hours: Tues-Sun 8.15am -6.35pm (last entry 6pm).

Admission: €9.50 (plus €3 to reserve in advance); concessions available.

**Piazza del Duomo** (Cathedral Square)

(Opening hours: Mon-Wed and Fri 10am-5pm, Thurs 10am-4.30pm, Sat 10am-4.45pm (1st



Sat each month 10am-3.30pm), Sun 1.30pm-4.45pm (last entry 40 minutes before closing. Admission: Free. Ph: +39 055 230 2885. Bus 14 or 23). Described by the architect Alberti as 'large enough to shelter all the people of Tuscany in its shadow', the Brunelleschi's gravity-defying dome dominates the Florence skyline and defines the city. (Cupola-Dome; opening hours: Mon-Fri 8.30am-7pm, Sat 8.30am-5.40pm; first Sat each

month 8.30am-4pm; last entry 40 minutes before closing; admission: €6; concessions available). **The cathedral**, built under the proviso that it be the largest house of worship in Christendom, a feat eventually claimed by St Peter's Cathedral in Rome, took 150 years to complete. For a spectacular view over the city you can choose to climb either the 463 steps to reach the dome's top or the 414 of the Giotto's straight-backed **Campanile** (Bell Tower: open daily 8.30am-7.30pm; last entry 40 minutes before closing; admission: €6; concessions available). The adjacent **Baptistry** (Piazza di San Giovanni: opening hours: Mon-Sat 1200-6.30pm and Sun and holidays 8.30am-1.30pm. Closed Easter Sun, 8 Sept.) completes the trio. This provided the inspiration for both the Campanile and Duomo façades. Originally believed to be a pagan temple, the octagonal building is the oldest in Florence where on its doors 10 bronze bas-reliefs tell a story from the Old Testament, with astonishing realism and compassion.

**Galleria dell'Accademia** (Accademia Gallery) ([www.polomuseale.firenze.it/accademia](http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it/accademia); ph: +39 055 238 8612; Bus 1, 17 or C; opening hours: Tue-Sun 8.15am-6.50pm;

Admission: €6.50; €9.50 in summer; concessions available).

On Via Ricasoli 60, corner of Piazza Annunziata, a never ending queue lets you know you're close to the Galleria dell'Accademia, home to



Michelangelo's magnificent nude, David. Carved from a massive lump of marble in 1502, when the artist was just 29 years old, with its exaggerated size and musculature is a symbol of the new-born Medici Republic. Other Michelangelo's work are there.

Close by is the **Museo di S. Marco** (Piazza S. Marco 3; ph: +39 055 238 8608; bus C, 1, 6, 10; open Tue-Fri 8.15am-1.50 pm; Sat 8.15 am-6.50pm; tickets:4€) that occupies the ex-convent of San Marco where Fra Angelico once lived as a monk. His ethereal paintings and frescos in the monks' cells are a strong attraction here as well as at the

Uffizi.

### Bargello National Gallery

(Via del Proconsolo 4; ph: +39 055 238 8606; [www.polomuseale.firenze.it/bargello](http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it/bargello); Bus 14; open: Tue-Fri 8.15am-1.50pm; last entry 1.20pm; open on the 2° and 4° Mon of each month and on the 1°, 3° and 5° Sun of each month. Admission: €4; concessions available). Erected between 1255 and 1345, formerly the city's jail and torture chamber, the museum opened to the public in 1865 with contributions from the Uffizi, the Mint and the State Archives. It is today one of the most

Room, with the original moulds used during the competition to design the Baptistry doors, Michelangelo's and Cellini's masterpieces.

### Ponte Vecchio

(Between Via de 'Guicciardini and Via Por Santa Maria; Bus B; open 24/7; on special request: Corridoio Vasariano, part of Uffizi Museum). This is the only bridge to survive the Nazi bombing of Florence during World War II. Nowadays, the famous bridge (1345) has been home to Florence's gold and silversmiths since the Granduke Ferdinando I de Medici, in XVI century, converted



important in the world, especially for Florentine Renaissance sculptures, French Medieval ivories and a collection of bronze mannerists. Visitors should see the Donatello

it from a motley crew of butchers, accustomed to throwing their bloody leftovers into the River Arno into a room for a more genteel trade. Famous are the Florentine wedding

rings. High above the shops, a secret passageway known as the Corrodoio Vasariano links the Uffizi Gallery to the Pitti Palace. Built by Vasari, it was intended to shield the powerful Medici family from the Florentine riffraff, as they journeyed from one palace to the other. In summer street performers literally occupy the passage.

Opened in 1895, **the Rose Garden** (1865) is a public park located in Oltrarno district right behind Piazzale Michelangelo (Viale G.



Poggi). A terraced acre where 350 types of ancient roses are carefully cultivated and from where you can get an enchanted view of Florence. Open only from May 1st till June 15th every year.

## » RESTAURANTS

An international place where students, journalists and actors usually meet is at Acqua al 2 (Via Vigna Vecchia,40; ph: +39 055

284 170; open daily from 7.30 pm-1am) a cheery and modern bistro where cannelloni, beef, selection of salads, pasta, cheese and excellent wines are served at average prices of €30.

For Florence's best bargain meal visit Salumeria, Vini, Trattoria (via Ghibellina 27; Ph+39 055 679 390, closed on Sat and Sun).

For a restaurant overlooking the Arno, we suggest the Antico Ristoro di Cambi, run by the Cambi family. A very traditional Tuscan trattoria, with warm welcome and ambience. The ribollita (the hearty tuscan vegetable soup) and the fiorentina T-bone steak are out of this world. (Close on Sunday, Via S. Onofrio 1r; ph: +39 055 217134; av. prices 25€; wine 8€).

Situated Oltrarno, the cheap trattoria la Casalinga is usually packed up. Situated between Pitti Palace and S. M. Del Carmine, serves ribollita and other typical dishes at fair prices. (Via del Michelozzo 9r; ph: +39 055 218624; av price 20€)

## » WINE BAR

For a good glass of wine or a nice dinner try GustaVino (Via della OCndotta, 37/R; ph: +39 055 2399 806; www.gustavino.it): very nice modern atmosphere and affordable prices at an average of 30€ per



person.

Le Volpi e L'Uva, Piazza de' Rossi 1, to sample some of the best wines the region has to offer. The owners, Riccardo and Emilio, can advise a plate of salami and cheese to accompany your choice of wine. Rex, Via Fiesolana 25r, is a sound bet for chic company, good mixers and tasty tapas, while for great snacks in the city centre, try Cantinetta del Verrazzono, Via dei Tavolini 18-20r.

South of the river there is tiny Vini, Via dei Cimatori 38, a simple wine counter (one of the last in the city) founded in 1875. Just stand on the pavement with the other customers and enjoy the wine.

## » CAFÉ

Italian cities have bars literally

on every corner. Bars serve café, cappuccinos, hot chocolates, tea, light snacks, aperitifs and are completely different from the classic American bars. We do not recommend any in particular but 2 remarkable ones! So if you wish to start the day with a good coffee downtown, we suggest the ancient renown café: the Gilli. Since 1733 on its tables it has been serving not only the black beverage but also all kinds of treats, chocolate pralines, desserts and light meals. It's a wine



bar and restaurant too. (Piazza della Repubblica; www.gilli.it; ph: +39 055 213 896). Just in front of it the 'competitor': the Giubbe Rosse Café where you can have brunch from 9€ or a complete menu from 18€ (Piazza della Repubblica 13/14; ph: +39 055 212 280).

Remember: in Italy, a coffee is way too cheaper (up to 1€) at the counter than at an outside table! So watch out especially on tourist cities! In this way you can enjoy a good coffee-break in stylish places without spending a fortune!

## » SHOPPING AND MARKETS

It is possible to make excellent purchases in the narrow lanes and streets of Florence which since Middle Ages has been a renowned city for its high-quality leather produce, goldsmiths and marble paper. Particularly around Santa Croce and Oltrarno you can easily find little authentic workshops. For good



quality hand-made paper: Il Papiro (Piazza del Duomo, 24r; ph: +39 055 281 628).

Visit the Officina Profumo Farmaceutica Shop (Via Scala, 16; ph: +39 055 16276 ): housed in a

frescoed chapel, this old-fashioned chemist was founded by monks in 17th cent; lotions, potions, and herbal remedies abound in elegant packaging. The city centre is rich in all sorts of shops, from used book shops to fashion stores as Rinascente, Zara (for quality budget clothing) or major fashion houses all between Via Tornabuoni and Via della Vigna Nuova. If you can't make



it and want that griffe on your clothes, you can: 1) wait the January and July sales; or visit some 'StockHouse', as One Price (ph:+39 055 284 674; Borgo Ognissanti, 74) where fashion clothes could be a way lot cheaper and almost affordable!

For second-hand and flea markets go to Piazza dei Ciompi (last Sun. of the month), S. Lorenzo Market (northwest of the Duomo), the colourful Central Market for food (Square of Mercato Centrale) bursting with olives, hams, cheeses and fresh vegetables or the International Antique Show

in Palazzo Corsini (Sep -Oct). For other fine Florentine antique shops go to Via Maggio and Borgo Ognissanti.

## » INTERNET POINT

Internet point (Borgo degli Albizi 66; ph:+39 055 24 0780; €3/hour)  
Internet Train: (€4/hour or €3/hour for students) with 12 point sin the city: Via dell'Oriuolo, 40, ph: +39 055 2345 322; Via del Parione 11b, ph:+39 055 264 5563; Borgo S. Jacopo, ph: +39 055 265 7935)

## » NIGHTLIFE

Florence's nightlife is fuelled not only by tourists but also by foreign students who come to study Italian and History of Art. As with any university city, bars and clubs experience peaks and troughs of popularity. As usual to find out where the action is we suggest you buy Firenze Spettacolo (website: [www.firenzespettacolo.it](http://www.firenzespettacolo.it)) – the city's definitive entertainment publication. On-line information for clubs and live music events can be found at [www.vivifirenze.it](http://www.vivifirenze.it). The most bohemian area is the Oltrarno, south of the river, where bright young things can play until the small hours. Elsewhere, nightlife is concentrated

around Piazza della Signoria, home of more sedate venues.

**Live Music:** good sounds at Be Bop, Via dei Servi 76, a cocktail bar specialising in live jazz and rock music. Or you can try The Jazz Club, Via Nuova dei Caccini 3, which serves up live music every Friday and Saturday. The Chiodo Fisso club, Via Dante Alighieri 16r, offers a varied repertoire and is popular with the locals

**Clubs:** One of the most popular discos in town with the young crowd is Tenax (Via Pratese, Peretola district). It also stages live concerts. Yab Yum (Via Sasseti 5r) is extremely trendy playing everything from hip-hop on Mondays to disco on Thursdays while Dolce Zucchero (Via Pandolfini 36) is a small club that quickly fills up with dancers but if you feel like samba and latin vibes, head for Maracana a lively Brazilian themed spot (Via Faenza 4).

## » SURROUNDINGS



The walk which should be undertaken by first-time visitors to Florence is, above-all, that which leads to **Fiesole**. These picturesque hills can be reached by bus n.7, which leaves from the central train station. The area provides the best views over the city and has fine buildings of artistic and archaeological interest including the Duomo, the Roman Theatre and the S.Francesco church, positioned high on a hill, in a position that has won the admiration of poets and writers. Every second Sunday in the month sees the main square host to a characteristic antique market. The Estate Fiesolana festival with concerts, dances and plays takes place in the Roman theatre during the summer (www.estatefiesolana.it; Jun- Sep).

Wine lovers with a car should explore the beautiful **Chianti region** just

south of Florence, a stunning area dotted with wine-growing estates spread out around ancient castles. Public transports also leads to surrounding areas as **Siena**, Arezzo Pisa and Lucca. They all are an hours' journey, though you'll need to devote a couple of days to Siena if you wish to explore it properly.

## » EVENTS

Florence's May Musical Festival: major music festival with orchestra, chorus and Corps of Ballet (www.maggiofiorentino.com; May-early Jul; Teatro Comunale)

Festa del Grillo (Festival of the Cricket): bizarre ancient ritual in which live crickets in hand-woven cages are given to loved ones (Ascension day: Apr/May at Parco delle Cascine)

Historic Florentine Football game in medieval dress, as part of celebrations for the city's patron, St. Jhon in Piazza S. Croce. Fashion shows and firework display in Piazza Michelangelo (24th June).

Rificolona Festival (Festival of



Lanterns), a torchlight procession dating back to the days of religious pilgrimage to celebrate the Virgin's nativity, with children carrying lanterns throughout the city (Sep.7th)

Florence Marathon, annual city marathon ( www.firenzemarathon.

it; each Nov. from Piazzale Michelangelo to Piazza S. Croce).

International Antique Festival (odd-numbered years; Sept-Oct).

International Craft Fair (April-beginning of May)

Florence Carnival (Apr-May at Lungarno Amerigo Vespucci)

Diladdarno: three weeks celebration, including music, exhibitions and street festivals (April; Oltrarno)



Scoppio del Carro (Explosion of the Cart): colourful procession of ox and cart, culminating in a spectacular fireworks display when the cart (lit by a mechanical dove) explodes at 11am on Easter Sunday (May/Apr), through central Florence to piazza Duomo.





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## » USEFUL INFORMATION

Ambulance 118  
Fire 115  
Police 112  
Area Code: +39 (Italy), 055  
(Florence)  
Currency: Euro

Main Tourist Office (APT)  
Via Cavour, 1  
[www.firenzeturismo.it](http://www.firenzeturismo.it)  
Mon- Sat 8.30am-6.30 pm  
Ph: +39 055 290 832

Main Post Office  
Via Pellicceria  
Mon- Fri. 8.15am- 6pm  
Sat: 8.15- 12

Medical Assistance for Tourists  
Mon-Fri 10-7pm; Sat: 9-2pm

Hospital S. M. Nuova  
(est of the Duomo)  
Ph:+39 055 27581  
United Hospitals of Careggi  
Viale Morgagni, 85  
Ph: +39 0554277111

## Embassies

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