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# Florence, Italy

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## Overview

### Introduction

Florence, Italy, is one of the most beautiful cities in the world—and for many visitors, it is the most splendid. While travel to the city usually centers on its attractions, including museums, palaces and churches that overflow with masterful paintings and sculpture, it is not limited to those destinations.

Visitors encounter the spirits of da Vinci, Dante, Boccaccio, Michelangelo and the Medicis, and the days of the Renaissance seem close at hand.

As the birthplace of the Renaissance, Florence combines unequalled beauty with centuries of history in a heady mix. Visitors' first glimpse of the Duomo is likely to take their breath away.

Florence is essentially a proud, provincial city, with a conservative mentality yet very liberal politics. Visitors can sense that its citizens pay a price for living in what has become, essentially, an open-air museum. Florentines—especially those who deal with masses of tourists daily—can be haughty and standoffish toward visitors. But there are many who will offer visitors a warm smile and a helpful gesture.

The vitality of this small city, the robustness of its cuisine, the enduring beauty of its architecture and the richness of its treasures cannot fail to educate, exhilarate and dazzle those who visit Florence.



*The skyline of Florence, Italy*

### Highlights

**Sights**—The Duomo (The Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore) and its dome; Battistero di San Giovanni (the Baptistery) and its intricate doors; Palazzo Pitti; Ponte Vecchio; Basilica di San Miniato al Monte with the splendid view from the Piazzale Michelangelo; the tomb sculptures by Michelangelo at the Cappelle Medicee; the view of downtown from the rooftop of The Continentale hotel.

**Museums**—*David* and Michelangelo's other sculptures at the Galleria dell'Accademia; the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo (with the original door panels of the Baptistery); the Museo Nazionale del Bargello (with works by Cellini, Donatello and Michelangelo); the Uffizi Gallery; the Galleria Palatina and Royal Apartments in the Pitti Palace.

**Memorable Meals**—A massive, rare *bistecca alla fiorentina* at Il Latini; *fritto del convento* (Florentine chicken and vegetables lightly fried) at the superb Il Francescano in the shadow of Santa Croce's convent; any of the restaurants on Piazza Santo Spirito.

**Late Night**—A stroll around Ponte Vecchio, with the lights reflected in the Arno; jazz at the Jazz Club; hot beats and top DJs at YAB.

**Walks**—A leisurely stroll along the terraced paths of Boboli Gardens; walking through Cascine Park and its enormous Tuesday market; a sunset stroll from Piazzale Michelangelo to Ponte Vecchio; exploring the Piazza Duomo pedestrian zone.

**Especially for Kids**—The Museo Stibbert and its park; the Gozzoli fresco in the Cappella dei Magi in Palazzo Medici-Riccardi; the Duomo's bell tower and dome; Galileo's telescope in the Museo Galileo.

### Geography

The historic city center of Florence, the Centro Storico, is where you'll find most of the city's monuments and attractions. The area was once encircled by medieval city walls. In the 1860s, when Florence was briefly capital of the newly formed Kingdom of Italy, the walls were replaced by large boulevards that today form a ring road (*viali di circonvallazione*) around the old city. The city falls naturally into two sections: the Duomo side of the Arno River, called *di qua d'Arno*, and—across the river—the Oltrarno side. (Oltrarno means "beyond the Arno.")

On the Duomo side, where visitors usually spend most of their time, Piazza della Signoria and the Duomo itself are grand, historic centers of religious and political power. The Oltrarno has its share of monuments such as the Palazzo Pitti and the churches of Santo Spirito and Santa Maria del Carmine, but it is less imposing and can feel more accessible. The last bastion of old Florentine popular culture is in the Oltrarno: The San Frediano neighborhood is still known for its artisans who handcraft shoes, restore furniture and practice goldsmithing, although their workshops are slowly disappearing.

A note about Florentine addresses: A street number such as 36/R means "36 rosso (red)," and 5/N would mean "5 nero (black)." All storefront commercial properties are marked with red street numbers (the coloring is usually worn off, making them simply stone-colored); residences have black numbers (sometimes they may look blue). Don't be surprised if the sequence of numbers is not continuous between the two colors: You may have 5/R followed immediately by 27/N. If there's no letter designation, the address is probably in the black sequence.

## History

Julius Caesar established Florentia, the "flourishing one," in 59 BC as a military post along the banks of the Arno River, and Roman walls embraced what is now the city center. The city did not truly come into its own until the 12th and 13th centuries, becoming an independent republic in 1198. In this period, a few merchant and banking families began to distinguish themselves in the world market, establishing guilds and bringing international commerce to the city. The florin, named after the city, became a standard unit of currency in Europe.

During the 13th and 14th centuries, the Guelphs (supporters of the pope) and the Ghibellines (upholders of the Holy Roman Emperor) battled each other. After these factions faded into history, the Medici family of bankers ruled the city. Their courts employed artists, designers, architects, artisans, musicians and poets, fostering an explosion of artistic production that has shaped the city to this day. Their dynasty lasted, on and off, until 1737, when Florence came under the rule of Maria Theresa of Austria.

At this time, a pact was drawn up in Vienna to guarantee the longevity and integrity of the Florentine artistic patrimony. The masterpieces of the Austrian crown and the private collections of the Medici family were handed over to the Tuscan government. The agreement stipulated that no work of art could be taken from the enormous collection. It also emphasized that the priceless works would be showcased to attract visitors to the region.

Italy itself was unified in 1860, and Florence became the capital of the Kingdom of Italy from 1865 to 1870. (Rome later became capital of the Republic of Italy.) The city had several setbacks in the 20th century: During World War II, all the bridges were blown up except the Ponte Vecchio, and many buildings along the river were destroyed. In 1966, a particularly devastating flood swept through the city, causing an incredible amount of damage to buildings and artworks. (You can still find markers throughout the city that indicate the water level that day.) More works were lost or seriously damaged in 1993 when a car bomb exploded in front of the Uffizi Gallery. After all three events, Florentines quickly rallied to restore the city and preserve its vital Renaissance legacy.

## Potpourri

Although there is no shortage of torture museums in Tuscany, Florentines were the first people in the world to outlaw the death penalty through the reforms of Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo in 1786.

The great medieval poet Dante Alighieri, author of the *Divine Comedy*, bitterly complained about the "shameless" Florentine women who freely showed their bare breasts in public. Rest assured, they don't do that anymore.

The "Stendhal Syndrome" (fainting from an overdose of art exposure) was first described by the French author Stendhal who experienced dizziness after visiting the church of Santa Croce.

Florence is extremely popular with language students because Florentines are said to speak the purest Italian.

The Uffizi is the busiest museum in Italy, with more than 2 million visitors per year. If you don't have a reservation, expect to wait many hours before you can enter.

After Oscar Wilde was arrested and tried in the U.K. in 1895, many affluent gay and lesbian British intellectuals flocked to Florence to enjoy the tolerant lifestyle there.

It is only mildly surprising that Florence was the birthplace of *Pinocchio* creator Carlo Lorenzini, also known as Carlo Collodi (but not in the Tuscan village from which he took his name). Another Florentine native was Realist painter John Singer Sargent, born to American parents in Florence in 1856.

Florence's leather and its beef steak, the famous *bistecca alla fiorentina*, come from the Chianina cow, a huge, pure white animal with large, expressive brown eyes.

## Hotel Overview

Because Florence is one of the most visited cities in Italy, advance booking is highly recommended.

The center does have a good number of hotels, and they'll put you within walking distance of just about everything. Staying in the center of the city will obviously be the costliest option, but even Florence's suburbs are expensive. The hotels on the hillsides at the outskirts of the city are relaxing, but your trip into the city may be slowed by traffic.

Note that most hotels in the center do not have parking areas, but instead have agreements with private garages that charge about 25 euros per day, on average.

## See & Do

### Sightseeing

Visitors rarely allot enough time for Florence, partly because until you've been there, it's difficult to comprehend how much there is to experience in the city. Any visit, brief or extended, should begin with the magnificent Duomo. Don't be content with admiring its stunning exterior: Go inside and gaze at the frescoes and take in the view from the top of the dome.

Afterward, check out the exquisite detail of the famed bronze doors of the adjacent Baptistery. The striking Palazzo Vecchio on Piazza della Signoria still functions as city hall. Take a tour and learn about the palace's integral role in Florentine history—as well as the reason for its unusual trapezoidal dimensions.

The most celebrated art museum in the city is the Uffizi Gallery, considered by many to be, along with the Louvre and El Prado, one of the most important museums in the world. The Uffizi has 13th- to 18th-century Italian and European masterworks—paintings by Botticelli, Hugo van der Goes, Titian, Rubens, Caravaggio, Raphael and Rembrandt, among others. The line at the Uffizi can get very long, so we strongly encourage advance reservations. Many hotels can make reservations for the Uffizi and other attractions for a small surcharge, similar to booking online in advance.

Another fabulous art museum is the Bargello, with its impressive collection of medieval and Renaissance armor, furnishings and sculpture—including Donatello's lion sculpture, the *Marzocco*, the symbol of Florence. The Accademia, near Piazza San Marco, is chiefly known for housing Michelangelo's *David*, although his many other sculptures there are worth the visit in their own right.

Cross the Arno on the Ponte Vecchio, which has spanned the river since 1345. The bridge still has shops and rooms jutting out over the sides—a common feature in the Middle Ages, although few examples remain today. The Vasari Corridor, which runs above the bridge, links the Uffizi with the Palazzo Pitti.

Sights on the other side of the Arno include the Palazzo Pitti, the archetype of all European royal residences and one of the best preserved, with beautifully decorated baroque interiors and the gorgeous Boboli Gardens on the hillside behind it. Be sure to see the Palazzo's Palatine Gallery, which contains 16th- and 17th-century paintings by Raphael, Titian, Veronese, Rubens and Van Dyck.

The fully furnished Royal Apartments date back to the last kings of Italy. Don't confuse the Palazzo Pitti with the Medici Chapels, which are connected to the Church of San Lorenzo—but they are also well worth a visit.

## Historic Sites

### Basilica di San Miniato al Monte

A five-minute walk from Piazzale Michelangelo in the Oltrarno takes you to the Basilica di San Miniato al Monte. One of the most beautiful examples of Romanesque churches in Italy, it offers a breathtaking view of Florence. The church contains a number of treasures, such as Spinello Aretino's 14th-century frescoes in the sacristy depicting scenes from the life of St. Benedict. During the siege of 1529 and 1530, Michelangelo designed the battlements that surround the property. Also, a number of notable people are buried there, among them Carlo Lorenzini, who wrote *Pinocchio* under the pen name Collodi.

Open in winter Monday-Saturday 8 am-1 pm and 3:30-7 pm; in summer daily 8 am-7 pm. Free.

Via del Monte alle Croci (also accessible from the travertine stairs on Viale Galileo Galilei, or take a No. 12 or 13 bus to the Piazzale Michelangelo and walk from there)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-234-2731

<http://www.sanminiatoalmon.te.it>

### Battistero di San Giovanni

There are few buildings in Florence older than the Baptistery of St. John, which is thought to date from the sixth or seventh century. Its present look, however, stems from 11th- and 12th-century renovations, and its monumental doors trace the development of Florentine sculpture from Gothic to Renaissance style. Examine the doors in an order that traces this development: Start with the south set (facing Via Calzaiuoli) designed by Andrea Pisano, and then move to the north doors (facing Via de Martelli). Finally, examine the gilded east doors, which Michelangelo declared worthy of being the "Doors of Paradise," and that is how they are known. The work of Lorenzo Ghiberti (who also designed the north doors), the east doors represent a revolutionary introduction of perspective into relief sculpture. Those on the Baptistery are reproductions—the originals are on display at the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo to protect them from pollution and too much contact. Inside the Baptistery, the ceiling is covered in beautiful, Byzantine-style mosaics.

Monday-Saturday noon-7 pm (first Saturday of the month 8:30 am-2 pm), Sunday and public holidays 8:30 am-2 pm. Last entry 30 minutes before closing; enter through the north door. 4 euros.

Piazza San Giovanni  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-230-2885

[http://www.museumsinflorence.com/musei/Baptistry\\_of\\_florence.html](http://www.museumsinflorence.com/musei/Baptistry_of_florence.html)

### Boboli Gardens

Eleonora di Toledo, wife of Cosimo I of the Medici family, had the garden built behind the Palazzo Pitti in 1549. The greatest talents of the day were summoned to the task, and the result is a true *giardino all'Italiana*, with lush hedges, evergreen trees, narrow paths, grottoes, fountains, ponds, citrus trees in terra-cotta pots, and a number of antique and late-Renaissance statues. It is today one of the most-visited sights in the city. Also on the grounds are the Museo delle Porcellane (Porcelain Museum) and an amphitheater that Edith Wharton called one of the triumphs of Italian garden architecture. A coffeehouse on the premises invites you to sip an espresso or an expensive drink and to enjoy the unforgettable view. There are three entrances (and ticket offices): on the right side of the Palazzo Pitti courtyard; on Via Romana, the street to the right of the palace; and on Piazzale di Porta Romana, through a gate in the city wall to the right of Porta Romana. If there's a long line at the palace entrance, try one of the others—they're usually less crowded.

The gardens are open 8:15 am until dusk; closed the first and last Monday of the month, 1 January, 1 May and Christmas. 7 euros (admission includes entrance to the Bardini Gardens, the Museo delle Porcellane, the Museo degli Argenti and the Costume Gallery) or you can purchase a combined ticket for the entire museum complex, good for three days, for 11.50 euros.

Palazzo Pitti, Oltrarno (behind the palace)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-229-8732

<http://www.giardinodiboboli.it>

### Campanile di Giotto

The bell tower of the Duomo, built by Giotto, is just under 85 m/279 ft tall and provides picturesque views of the Duomo, the Palazzo Vecchio, the Church of San Lorenzo and more through its imposing mullioned windows. And you only have to climb 414 steps; there is no elevator.

Daily 8:30 am-7:30 pm. Last entry 40 minutes before closing. 6 euros. A combined ticket for all the key monuments of the Cathedral, including the Campanile, the Museo dell'Opera, the Duomo, the Baptistry and the Crypt is 10 euros. Tickets can be purchased in advance online.

Piazza Duomo (adjacent to the Duomo)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-230-2885

<http://www.museumflorence.com>

### Cappella Brancacci

One of the less publicized jewels of Florence, the Brancacci Chapel is a side chapel of the rather somber church of Santa Maria del Carmine. Inside is some of the very best work of Masaccio (with contributions from Filippino Lippi and Masolino): a series of frescoes (restored in the 1980s) depicting scenes from Genesis and the life of St. Peter. Only 30 visitors are allowed in the cappella at one time.

Monday-Saturday 9:30 am-1 pm and 2-5 pm, Sunday 9:30 am-12:30 pm. The ticket office closes at 4 pm. Reservations suggested during high season and for large groups. 6 euros.

Piazza del Carmine 14 (Oltrarno,  
northwest of the Palazzo Pitti)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-276-8224

<http://www.museiciviciorentini.it/en/brancacci>

### Cappella dei Magi

The Chapel of the Wise Men is a small family chapel within the Palazzo Medici Riccardi. It's a little jewel, thanks to Benozzo Gozzoli's gorgeous frescoes. Restoration of the chapel in the early 1990s revealed the vibrant colors of the original, especially the gold leaf used on the figure of Balthasar. The Medicis and their contemporaries of note are represented as part of a procession of wise men that winds around three walls of the chapel toward the nativity scene above the altar. Entrance to the chapel is limited to a maximum of eight visitors every seven minutes.

Thursday-Tuesday 9 am-5 pm. 7 euros. Admission includes the courtyard garden and Galleria di Luca Giordano (one of the finest baroque interiors in town) of the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi.

Palazzo Medici-Riccardi, Via Cavour 3  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-276-0340

<http://www.palazzo-medici.it/ita/info.htm>

### Cappelle Medicee

The Medici family commissioned the Medici Chapels, part of a larger complex that includes the Church of San Lorenzo, as its own memorial. Some of Michelangelo's most famous and moving sculptures (some unfinished) adorn the tombs of the Medici within the New Sacristy, which he designed. The chapels also contain some of the finest examples of *pietre dure* (hard-stone inlay), also called—inaccurately—Florentine mosaic.

Daily 8:15 am-6 pm; closed the second and fourth Sunday and the first, third and fifth Monday of the month. 6 euros. Reservations can be made online.

Piazza Madonna degli Aldobrandini 6  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-294-883

<http://www.cappellemedicee.it>

### Loggia della Signoria

Also called the Loggia dei Lanzi, this arcade along the side of the Piazza della Signoria shelters a number of important sculptures, including Cellini's *Perseus Slaying Medusa* and Giambologna's *Rape of the Sabines*. In the square itself are copies of several famous statues that are housed elsewhere in Florence, including Michelangelo's *David* and Donatello's *Judith and Holofernes*. The Loggia's roof was modified and turned into a terrace by the architect Bernardo Buontalenti so that the Medici family could watch the ceremonies in the piazza from a great vantage point.

Piazza della Signoria (on the Uffizi side of  
the piazza, near the Palazzo Vecchio)  
Florence, Italy

<http://www.piazza-signoria.com>

## Palazzo Pitti

Originally built in 1458 by the influential banker Luca Pitti, the palace was purchased about a century later by Cosimo I of the Medici family. He and his wife enlarged it, commissioned the Vasari Corridor (Il Corridoio Vasariano), which connects the palace with the Uffizi across the river, and designed the adjacent Boboli Gardens. Successive generations of Medicis enlarged the palace further in order to house their courts. The palace's museums are located inside The Royal Apartments.

There are eight separate museums in this huge edifice. The most important is the Palatine Gallery, which houses works by old masters. Among the others are museums devoted to silver and other precious materials, porcelain, art from the Napoleonic era to the 1940s, and period dress, which, frankly, aren't that impressive when compared to the Palatine. The ticket office for the museums is on the right side of the courtyard.

Tuesday-Sunday 8:15 am-6:50 pm. The ticket office closes at 6:05 pm. A combined ticket for the entire museum complex of the Pitti Palace including the apartments and gardens is the best deal—it is 11.50 euros and is valid for three days. A ticket covering just the Galleria Palatina and the Modern Art Gallery, two popular museums, is 8.50 euros. Audioguides are 5.50 euros. No credit cards.

Palazzo Pitti 1  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-294-883 or 055-238-8611

<http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it/en/musei/pitti.php?m=palazzopitti>

## Palazzo Vecchio

The palace and surrounding square have been at the heart of Florentine politics since the 1200s. The palace is still the city hall and plays a vital role in Florentine life. The building took on its trapezoidal shape because of the Guelph government's reluctance to build on the soil of the formerly Ghibelline neighborhood, which they, as victors, had razed to the ground.

Part of the building is open to visitors, including the impressive Salone dei Cinquecento, decorated for Cosimo I by Vasari. In addition to other beautifully decorated rooms, don't miss the original bronze sculpture of *Judith and Holofernes* by Donatello and the *Cherub with a Dolphin* fountain by Verrocchio.

October-March Thursday 9 am-2 pm, Friday-Wednesday 9 am-7 pm; April-September Thursday 9 am-2 pm, Friday-Wednesday 9 am-midnight. The ticket office closes one hour before the building does. Tickets are 10 euros for the museum, 14 euros for the museum and tower. A multimedia guide is available for 5 euros.

Piazza della Signoria  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-276-8325

<http://museivicivicifiorentini.comune.fi.it/palazzovecchio>

## Piazzale Michelangelo

This panoramic terrace on a hill overlooking Florence from the Oltrarno was designed by Florentine architect Giuseppe Poggi in 1869. It offers a splendid view encompassing not only the city, but also the surrounding hills. This area was one of the hot spots in the siege of 1529 and 1530, when Michelangelo was appointed military engineer. To commemorate the artist's role in defending Florence, in the 1800s the city named the open square and avenue after him.

The Piazzale, as it's known to Florentines, gets very crowded on weekend afternoons and evenings, especially in fine weather. Try to catch the view at sunset—it's stunning. The walk up from the Piazza Poggi near the Arno is steep, but a No. 12 or 13 bus can take you there. For a pleasant walk down, take the steps from the front of the balustrade. On the way down stop at the Rose Garden, a pretty garden with a panoramic view and more than 350 kinds of roses. Interspersed in the garden are 11 sculptures from Belgian artist Jean-Michel Folon.

## Ponte Vecchio

The "old bridge" is an enduring symbol of Florence. It spans the most narrow point of the Arno, on the site of the original Roman bridge, with a unique structure dating from 1345. The shops you see there today housed butcher shops and grocers until 1593, when Ferdinand I de' Medici decided that such humble (and smelly) shops were unsuitable for a bridge connecting the Medici residence (Palazzo Pitti) and the government offices (the Uffizi). He decreed that only goldsmiths and jewelers could tend shop on the bridge, and it has remained that way ever since. During World War II, it was the only bridge spanning the Arno that the Germans did not destroy—they focused instead on demolishing the medieval buildings on either side.

The two lines of shops break in the center, affording views of the river in both directions. The bridge crosses the Arno River at Via Por Santa Maria. Heading into the city center (*di qua d'Arno*), Via Por Santa Maria and Via Calimala take you directly to the Duomo; on the other side of the river (Oltrarno), Via de' Guicciardini leads to the Palazzo Pitti.

### Santa Croce

This masterpiece of Florentine Gothic architecture is a basilica run by Franciscan monks. Construction of the church began in the late 1200s and took nearly a century to complete. Beautiful pillars are topped by sweeping Gothic arches. The many altars and small chapels that line the walls of the basilica are filled with tombs, sculpture and paintings. Because many notable Italians—including Michelangelo, Galileo, Machiavelli and others—are buried in the church, it ranks as a national shrine. The church is located on a lovely understated piazza of the same name, with just a handful of cafes and restaurants and a broad open space with benches to stop and appreciate the beauty of the church's marble facade, a relatively recent addition from the 19th century.

Monday-Saturday 9:30 am-5:30 pm, Sunday 2-5:30 pm. 6 euros (includes entrance to the basilica and the Museo dell'Opera di Santa Croce). Last entrance 30 minutes before closing.

Piazza Santa Croce 16  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-246-6105

<http://www.santacroceopera.it>

### Santa Maria Novella

Visitors arriving by train have the church of Santa Maria Novella as their first, impressive introduction to Florentine art and architecture. The airy nave contains a striking crucifix painted by Giotto, the *Trinity* by Masaccio and Brunelleschi's wooden *Crucifix* (also called the "egg crucifix" because legend has it that Donatello was so impressed by it, he dropped the satchel of eggs he was carrying).

Monday-Thursday 9 am-5:30 pm, Friday 11 am-5:30 pm, Saturday 9 am-5 pm. 5 euros. Ticket office closes 30 minutes before the church closes.

Piazza Santa Maria Novella 18  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-219-257

<http://www.chiesasantamarianovella.it>

### Santo Spirito

This stark but beautiful Renaissance church is Filippo Brunelleschi's last great work. Inside, // *Crocifisso* (the Crucifixion), attributed to the young Michelangelo, is on display.

Thursday-Tuesday 9:30 am-noon and 4-5:30 pm. Free.

Piazza di Santo Spirito (Oltrarno,  
northwest of the Palazzo Pitti)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-210-030

<http://www.basilicasantospirito.it>

### Sinagoga

Florence's synagogue is also the location of the Museo di Arte e Storia Ebraica (Museum of Jewish Art and History). The synagogue was completed in 1882, and the museum was established in 1981. The two-story museum gives an overview of the Jewish community and a history of its relationship with the city of Florence. English-language guided tours run every hour.

Sunday-Thursday 10 am-6:30 pm (October-March until 5:30 pm), Friday 10 am-2 pm (October-March till 3 pm). 6.50 euros adults.

Via Luigi Carlo Farini 4  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-234-6654

<http://www.moked.it/jewishflorence>

## The Duomo

The Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore—the Duomo—is one of the largest cathedrals in the world. It's topped by Filippo Brunelleschi's dome, a stupendous feat of 15th-century engineering. The architect used a method of his own creation to build it, inventing equipment and machines to meet his needs. The interior vault of the dome features Giorgio Vasari and Federico Zuccari's *The Last Judgment*. It's the largest fresco painting in the world, and it took 16 years to restore.

Piazza del Duomo  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-230-2885

<http://www.ilgrandemuseodelduomo.it>

You can go beneath the nave to visit excavations of the earlier Romanesque church on the site; Brunelleschi's tomb is there. A climb to the top of the dome affords a wonderful panorama of Florence from the base of the lantern, but the 463-step ascent (no elevator) is not for everyone. Enter through the Porta della Mandorla of the Duomo (north side). Lines are shortest around 4 pm.

Visitors can climb the cathedral's dome Monday-Friday 8:30 am-7 pm, Saturday 8:30 am-5:40 pm. The cathedral is open Monday-Friday 10 am-5 pm (closes at 4 pm on Thursday in May and October, 4:30 pm January-April, November and December), Saturday 10 am-4:45 pm, Sunday and holidays 1:30-4:45 pm. Last entry 40 minutes before closing. Entrance to the cathedral is free. Admission to the dome itself is 8 euros, but for 10 euros you can get access to all the monuments of the Cathedral complex—the Duomo, Campanile, Museum, Baptistry and Crypt.

## Museums

Museum times and prices change frequently, and museums occasionally close for renovation, trade union meetings, lack of personnel, strikes or to take inventory. Some close for the day at 1 or 2 pm, and most are closed during religious holidays. Check with any of the tourist offices for the latest information.

Entrance tickets for state-run museums can be booked in advance by calling Firenze Musei. A service fee of 3 euros is charged (even for reduced-price or free tickets). The service fee for the Uffizi Gallery and Galleria dell'Accademia, the two sights where lines for entrance are the longest, is 4 euros. Having your tickets in hand will save time, especially during peak tourist season (late spring and summer). Book tickets at least a day in advance. Monday-Friday 8:30 am-6:30 pm, Saturday 8:30 am-12:30 pm. Phone 055-294-883. For more information, visit <http://www.firenzemusei.it>.

The Firenze Card offers admission to more than 30 museums in Florence, as well as bus and tram transportation throughout the city. The card is valid for 72 hours and costs 72 euros. In many cases you can avoid ticket lines by using the card. Check the advantages of the card against your planned itinerary carefully; it will only save you money if you plan to see enough of the attractions it covers. The complete list of museums and attractions it includes is updated regularly. For more information, visit <http://www.firenzecard.it>.

## Galleria d'Arte Moderna

Art of the modern era, from Napoleon's time to the 1940s, situated on the second floor of the Palazzo Pitti. Perhaps the most interesting paintings are those by members of the Macchiaioli School—Italy's answer to the Impressionists—including Martelli, Fattori and Signorini.

Tuesday-Sunday 8:15 am-6:50 pm. 8.50 euros for regular admission, which also includes entrance to the Galleria Palantina.

Palazzo Pitti  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-238-8601 or 055-294-883  
for reservations

<http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it/en/musei/?m=artemoderna>

## Galleria del Costume

Displays period costumes, clothing and accessories, allowing you to follow the development of Italian fashion over the past 200 years. Costumes are displayed chronologically and set within the context of their time period.

Tuesday-Sunday 8:15 am-6:50 pm in the summer months of June, July and August. Closes one to two hours earlier for the rest of the year. 7.50 euros for regular admission.

Palazzo Pitti  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-238-8801 or 055-294-883  
for reservations

<http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it/en/musei/?m=costume>

### Galleria dell'Accademia

Of the three statues of Michelangelo's *David* in Florence, the original can be admired there. In 1873, it was moved from its original position in front of Palazzo Vecchio, where a copy stands today. You may also view Michelangelo's four *Prigioni* (prisoners) in the Accademia. In their unfinished form, the statues seem to struggle to emerge from the marble. There's also a notable collection of 13th- to 18th-century paintings that would constitute a remarkable museum collection on their own.

Tuesday-Sunday 8:15 am-6:50 pm. Ticket office closes 30 minutes before closing time, but you will have to stand in a very long line to get there. Better to reserve almost a week ahead for an appointment. 6.50 euros.

Via Ricasoli 60  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-238-8609 or 055-294-883  
for reservations

<http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it/en/musei/?m=accademia>

### Galleria Palatina

The main gallery in the Palazzo Pitti, the Palatine Gallery is full of works by Titian, Raphael, Rubens, Tintoretto, Caravaggio and others. Make sure you look up: The ceiling decorations are masterpieces in their own right.

Tuesday-Sunday 8:15 am-6:50 pm. Ticket office closes 30 minutes before closing time. 8.50 euros for regular admission, which includes entrance to the Galleria d'Arte Moderna as well.

Palazzo Pitti  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-238-8614 or 055-294-883  
for reservations

<http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it/en/musei/?m=palatina>

### Gucci Museo

Housed in the historic Palazzo della Mercanzia, founded in 1308 on the site of an ancient Roman theater, the Gucci Museum is a cultural center dedicated to Gucci's archives and contemporary art. It chronicles Gucci's 90-year history from its beginnings when founder Guccio Gucci made a name for himself in fine leather goods. There is a chic cafe, restaurant and gift shop on-site.

Daily 10 am-8 pm. 7 euros.

Piazza della Signoria  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-7592-3302

<http://www.guccimuseo.com>

### Museo Archeologico

The Archaeological Museum of Florence is one of the most important in Italy. Originally a Medici collection, it was expanded by the Lorraine dynasty in the late 18th century. There are many priceless remains from the Etruscan period, including the *Chimera of Arezzo*, the *Orator* and the *Minerva of Arezzo*. Greek and Egyptian artifacts are also on display.

Tuesday-Friday 8:30 am-7 pm, Saturday and Sunday 8:30 am-2 pm. Ticket office closes 45 minutes before closing time. Admission is 4 euros, audioguide is 5 euros.

Via della Pergola 65 (the public entrance is at Piazza Santissima Annunziata 9B)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-23575

<http://www.archeotoscana.beniculturali.it/index.php?it/146/firenze-museo-archeologico-nazionale>

### Museo degli Argenti (The Medici Treasury)

This museum gets its name from its silver collection, but it contains many other treasures collected by the ruling families of Florence: vases of lapis and other rare gemstones, jewelry, carved ivory and paintings. The setting itself, in rooms designed by artist Giovanni da San Giovanni in 1634, is spectacular.

Daily 8:15 am-4:30 pm November-February; open till 6:30 pm March-May and September; till 7:30 pm June-August; till 5:30 pm October. Closed the first and last Monday of the month. 7 euros (includes entrance to the Galleria del Costume, Museo della Porcellane, the Boboli Gardens and the Bardini Gardens).

Palazzo Pitti  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-238-8709 or 055-294-883  
for reservations

<http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it/en/musei/?m=argenti>

### Museo dell'Opera del Duomo

This museum keeps most of the major works of art from the Baptistery and the Duomo safe from the elements and crowds. Included in its collection are Michelangelo's *Pieta* (made for his own tomb) and Donatello's renderings of Mary Magdalene, St. John the Evangelist and the prophets Habakkuk and Jeremiah. The original eastern doors from the Baptistery are on display there. The Baptistery's stunning silver altar—a masterpiece of Florentine silversmithing—is there, as well.

Monday-Saturday 9 am-7:30 pm, Sunday and holidays 9 am-1:45 pm. Ticket office closes 40 minutes before the museum closes. 10 euros.

Piazza del Duomo 9  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-230-2885

<http://www.ilgrandemuseodelduomo.it>

### Museo di San Marco

This beautiful museum is in the former convent adjoining the church of San Marco. It is best known for the numerous frescoes by Fra Angelico within the monks' cells and elsewhere. Don't miss the *Last Supper* by Ghirlandaio. Because it's located across the square from the Accademia, it's easy to visit both in one day.

Monday-Friday 8:15 am-1:15 pm, Saturday 8:15 am-4:15 pm. 4 euros adults.

Piazza San Marco 1  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-238-8608 for reservations

<http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it/en/musei/?m=sanmarco>

### Museo Galileo (Institute and Museum of the History of Science)

This renovated museum houses the Medici collection of scientific instruments and has a whole section dedicated to Galileo Galilei. Highlights are the vast collection of telescopes and globes and a very macabre display of Galileo's preserved finger. The museum is home to the only original instruments of Galileo that have survived.

Daily 9:30 am-6 pm (Tuesday till 1 pm). 9 euros adults.

Piazza dei Giudici 1  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-265-311

<http://www.museogalileo.it>

### Museo Nazionale del Bargello

The Bargello is impressive, powerful, foreboding and hostile. Once the judicial offices and prison of Florence, it was the scene of many hangings. Now a museum, it holds one of the finest collections of Renaissance sculpture in Italy, with masterpieces by Michelangelo, Verrocchio, Giambologna and Cellini, among others.

Daily 8:15 am-1:50 pm; closed the first, third and fifth Sunday and the second and fourth Monday of the month. Ticket office closes 40 minutes early. 4 euros adults.

Via del Proconsolo 4  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-238-8606 or 055-294-883  
for reservations

<http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it/en/musei/?m=bargello>

### Museo Stibbert

This is a great place for children—Museo Stibbert features lots of knights in armor on horseback and a park that surrounds the building. The museum is the city's legacy from the Englishman Frederick Stibbert (1838-1906), who amassed some 50,000 pieces in his beautiful estate on the hillside of Montughi. Arms and armor from around the world make up the bulk of the collection, but you'll see art from Europe, the Middle East and Pacific Asia, as well as porcelain, furnishings, tapestries and relics from Napoleon I. The bonus is the Arts and Crafts-style villa itself.

Monday-Wednesday 10 am-2 pm, Friday-Sunday 10 am-6 pm; ticket office closes one hour before the museum. 8 euros adults.

Via Stibbert 26 (in the hills north of the city center; take a No. 4 bus from Piazza dell'Unita)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-475-520

<http://www.museostibbert.it>

## Museums of Fiesole

Fiesole has an archaeological area that includes the remnants of Etruscan walls, a Roman theater, an Etruscan temple and Roman baths, plus an archaeological museum. The Bandini Museum (open Friday-Sunday) houses an art collection that includes Byzantine works and polychrome glazed terra-cotta sculptures from the della Robbia workshop in Florence.

Daily 10 am-7 pm. 12 euros adults.

Via Portigiani 1  
Fiesole, Italy

**Phone:** 055-596-1293

<http://www.museidifiesole.it>

## Uffizi Gallery

One of the greatest museums in the world, this collection was originally the private property of the Medici family. As the Medici dynasty was ending in the early 1700s, Anna Maria Ludovica de' Medici—the last of the family—determined that the museum would become the eternal birthright of the city of Florence and its citizens.

The museum contains the greatest collection of Italian Renaissance paintings and sculpture in the world, starting with pre-Renaissance masters such as Giotto and progressing through Masaccio, da Vinci, Michelangelo and innumerable others. Don't miss the Botticelli rooms—*Spring* and *The Birth of Venus* are breathtaking. There's also an excellent selection of northern masters, especially Rubens, Van Dyck and Rembrandt. The Uffizi also has an entire wing devoted to works by Caravaggio and others that were previously relegated to storage. The terrace cafe atop the Loggia della Signoria affords wonderful views of the Piazza della Signoria, the Palazzo Vecchio and the town of Fiesole on the horizon.

Various rooms close on occasion because of staff shortages or cleaning, so check the list of closures at the entrance if you're hoping to see a particular work or works by a particular artist. Also note that some pieces from the collection occasionally go on loan. Split up your visit if you have time to do so. Lines can be horrendous, especially in high season—make life easier with advance reservations if at all possible.

Tuesday-Sunday 8:15 am-6:50 pm. The ticket office closes at 6:05 pm. Reservations can be made online (<http://www.b-ticket.com/b-ticket/Uffizi/default.aspx>). 6.50 euros, 11 euros during special exhibitions.

Loggiato degli Uffizi 6  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-238-8651 or 055-294-883  
for reservations

<http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it/en/musei/?m=uffizi>

## Zoologia "La Specola"

This science museum opened to the public in 1775 and displays some creepy sights: perfectly accurate wax replicas of the human body, inside and out. Impressive in their precision, the bodies and their organs are presented from all angles. Other rooms are dedicated to taxidermied animals from all over the world.

October-May Tuesday-Sunday 9:30 am-4:30 pm; June-September 10:30 am-5:30 pm. 6 euros.

Via Romana 17, Third Floor (just down  
the street from Palazzo Vecchio)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-275-5100

<http://www.visitare-firenze.it/museo-la-specola>

## Parks & Gardens

### Cascine Park

Situated a walkable distance west of the city center along the north bank of the Arno, the largest park in Florence was once a game preserve and royal farm. The grounds were opened to the public in 1791 by Pietro Leopoldo I, who embellished them with sculptures and fountains. Shelley wrote his *Ode to the West Wind* while gazing at the *Narcissus* fountain. Cascine Park is populated by joggers and children at play during the day (as well as the big Tuesday market), but be aware that after dark it becomes an open-air bordello. Bus 17-C stops at Piazzale Kennedy in the center of the park. On weekends, the park is served by a special bus line, designated with a P, that departs from Piazzale Vittorio Veneto.

## Religious Sites

### Cattedrale di San Romolo

Also known as the Fiesole Cathedral, this church was built in honor of Saint Romulus over the site of his martyrdom in 1028. The cathedral is a mix of architectural history, with its facade still intact, from its 11th-century construction to various works dating up until the 17th century. Inside, you'll find notable early works by Mino da Fiesole, a Florentine sculptor who was recognized for his distinct bust works. The interior is modestly decorated, with a 13th-century styled marble altar and two frescoes from the 15th century depicting St. Benedict and St. Sebastian.

Piazza Mino da Fiesole  
Fiesole, Italy

### San Francesco Monastery

This tiny 14th-century church and monastery is perched on one of the scenic high points of Fiesole. Inside, the church's nave is adorned with works by Piero di Cosimo, Cenni di Francesco and Neri di Bicci. In addition to viewing the church's art, wander upstairs to find original monastic cells and rooms. Each cell has study tables and a window overlooking the scenic hillside. You can really imagine life as it was for monks in this monastery.

Via San Francesco 13  
Fiesole, Italy

## Wineries, Breweries & Distilleries

### Bibi Graetz

For a glimpse of local winemaking culture, spend an afternoon at this gorgeous Fiesole winery.

Reservations recommended.

Via di Vinciagliata 19  
Fiesole, Italy  
<http://www.bibigraetz.com>

## Recreation

Because the historical center of Florence is compact, there's little room for recreation besides a walk or jog in the park. You'll need to head for the outskirts to find many of the relaxing (or strenuous) activities you might be looking for.

## Bicycling

### Florence by Bike

Renting bikes, bike gear and scooters, this shop also offers a guided bike tour of the Chianti region.

April-October Monday-Friday 9 am-1 pm and 3:30-7:30 pm, Saturday 9 am-7 pm, Sunday 9 am-5 pm. November-March Monday-Saturday 9 am-1 pm and 3:30-7:30 pm, closed Sunday and holidays. Rates start at 3 euros.

Via Zanobi 120-R (near Piazza San Marco)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-488-992

<http://www.florencebybike.it>

### Mille e Una Bici

With pickup and drop-off locations all around Florence, this city-run bike rental is convenient. The best location is in front of the train station; other locations include Piazza Annigoni, Stazione Campo di Marte and Piazza Santa Croce. The bicycles are all basic street bikes; make sure to inspect yours before riding away (there are 100 to choose from).

May-October daily, November-April Monday-Saturday. 2 euros for one hour; 5 euros for five hours; 10 euros for a full day.

Piazza della Stazione  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 346-883-7821

<http://www.bicifirenze.it>

## Golf

To get to the golf courses closest to Florence, you'll need a car—they are all a good hour's drive from the city. Golf is not a popular sport in Italy, and you may find that playing can be quite expensive. The courses are in pleasant settings and can provide a whole day's recreation. All require a membership card from a golf club in your home country, as well as a reservation.

### Poggio dei Medici Golf & Country Club

This 18-hole course lies in a prime scenic location on the grounds of a hotel a few miles/kilometers outside Florence.

Open year-round.

Via San Gavino 27  
Scarperia, Italy

**Phone:** 055-843-5562

<http://www.golfpoggiodeimedici.com>

### Golf dell'Ugolino

Originally the Florence Golf Club, established by British expatriates in 1889, the 18-hole course is in a picturesque location outside Florence. It's open year-round and has an attractive clubhouse and swimming pool.

Via Chiantigiana 3  
Grassina, Italy

**Phone:** 055-230-1009

<http://www.golfugolino.it>

## Hiking & Walking

It's not advisable to jog in the streets of Florence, especially in the city center. They are narrow and crowded, the road surfaces are very uneven and the pollution is bad. Determined joggers head to Viali dei Colli or Cascine Park (but avoid Cascine after dark).

There are lots of great walks along the hilly country roads outside the city, though. One enjoyable stroll is along the Costa San Giorgio. Start at Piazza Santa Felicita, on the Oltrarno side of Ponte Vecchio. When you reach Forte di Belvedere, take Via di San Leonardo to its intersection with Viale Galileo Galilei.

From there you have two options: Head to the right, and the Viale winds down to Porta Romana (the name of the street will change to Viale Machiavelli en route); or head to the left and you'll arrive at Piazzale Michelangelo, from which you can get back to town either by the travertine steps at the end of Viale Galilei, which lead to San Niccolo (St. Nicholas' city gate and church), or by the stepped ramps that lead from the Piazzale down to the riverside. If you've had enough, you can pick up a No. 12 or 13 bus at the Piazzale.

## Swimming

### Nannini Bellariva

The Nannini pool complex, southeast of the city along the Arno River, has certain times when it is open to the public. It has its own grounds with lawns and trees, plenty of lounges for sunbathing, and a rooftop terrace restaurant that serves inexpensive pizzas and three-course meals. It has an Olympic-sized pool, as well as a children's pool that's open in the summer.

Phone for hours. 7 euros for the day.

Lungarno Aldo Moro 6 (take a No. 14  
bus to the RAI building and walk to the  
river)  
Florence, Italy

## Nightlife

Early summer evenings are tranquil—Florentines and visitors alike stroll the narrow streets with an ice-cream cone in hand, or sip *aperitivi* or iced tea in the piazzas. Although there are places to go as the night goes on, the town doesn't have a big local nightlife scene. The Florentine idea of a pleasant evening is a good meal, a pizza, an evening at the opera or visiting with friends at home.

The bars and discos that do exist generally shut down around 3 am and mainly attract young people, especially foreign students. In the past few years, some British- and Irish-style pubs have sprung up, and if you have energy left after a day of sightseeing, you may well enjoy

yourself there.

## Bars, Taverns & Pubs

### Fuori Porta

This unobtrusive, cozy wine bar is hidden away in a very untouristy area on the Oltrarno. White, red and dessert wines are sold by the glass. You can drop in for a quick drink or make an evening of it, tasting wines from every producing region of Italy or, if you prefer, from France or the U.S. A wide range of sandwiches, crostini and *primi* (pasta dishes) are also available. You can purchase bottles of wine and have them shipped from there.

Daily 12:30-3:30 pm and 6:30 pm-12:30 am; open all day during summer.

Via del Monte alle Croci 10/R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-234-2483

<http://www.fuoriporta.it>

### La Dolce Vita

This sleek cafe-turned-club is favored by the beautiful people who, on summer evenings, spill out into the piazza with their drinks in hand and Prada sunglasses still on their heads well after dark. Live Brazilian, jazz and contemporary music is offered throughout the week; schedules vary. Also hosts a small contemporary art gallery with monthly changing exhibits.

Daily 5 pm-2 am in winter, 10 am-2 am in summer. Happy hour with buffet 7:30-9:30 pm (and a popular seafood buffet on Friday). Open later on Friday and Saturday.

Piazza del Carmine 6-R (Oltrarno)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-284-595

<http://www.dolcevitaflorence.com>

### Le Volpi e L'Uva

Cozy little wine bar (or *enoteca con degustazione*) serving up wines by the glass with a nice variety of cheese and meats.

Daily 11 am-9 pm.

Piazza dei Rossi 1 (near Santa Felicità)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-239-8132

<http://www.levolpieluva.com>

### The Continentale

The Continentale bills itself as a "contemporary pleasing hotel," but it is best known for its rooftop terrace, "La Terrazza," and the 270-degree panorama overlooking the Arno. It is one of those rare Italian bars that knows how to make a vodka martini, and the price (13 euros) reflects this. Like the Dolce Vita, it caters to a Saint Tropez-chic crowd, but even if this isn't your cup of Veuve Cliquot, there is no better place to witness the sunset.

Vicolo dell'Oro 6-R (right at the foot of  
the Ponte Vecchio)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-27262

<http://www.lungarnocollection.com/#/en/the-collection/florence/hotel-continendale/bar-and-dining>

### The Fiddler's Elbow

One of a number of Irish pubs, this spot is popular with locals, visiting students and tourists alike. Guinness and McFarland are on tap. Snacks served. Big-screen TV and game room with pool table and darts.

Daily noon-2 am, with happy hour until 9 pm.

Piazza Santa Maria Novella 7-R (close to  
the central train station)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-215-056

<http://thefiddlerselbow.com>

### Zanobini

Brothers Gino and Silvano are your hosts at the great stand-up wine bar and shop where the locals drink. They produce their own label wine and an excellent olive oil.

Daily 11 am-8 pm. Wines from 1.50 euros per glass.

Via San Antonino 47-R  
Florence, Italy

### Dance & Nightclubs

Cover charges at most dance clubs will set you back roughly 15 euros-20 euros.

### Salamanca

This Latin American disco club also serves food. Live music plays on Monday, and tables are cleared for dancing most nights after the kitchen closes.

Daily from 6:30 pm. No cover.

Via Ghibellina 80/R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-234-5452

<http://www.salamanca.it>

### Tabasco

One of the oldest and best Florentine gay clubs, Tabasco does not admit women.

Daily 10 pm-4 am (Friday and Saturday till 6 am).

Piazza Santa Cecilia 3 (just off Piazza  
della Signoria)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-213-000

<http://www.tabascogay.it>

### Tenax

Still the most fashionable nightclub in Florence, this club lies on the outskirts of the city. DJs arrive from all over Europe to spin, but there are five or six live shows a month, too. Saturday nights are best, with lots of house, progressive and drum 'n' bass.

Tuesday-Sunday from 10:30 pm. Cover varies (Thursday is free for students with valid ID).

Via Pratese 46 (you can get there via the  
No. 29 or 30 bus, but you will need to  
take a taxi back)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-308-160 or 335-523-5922  
for reservations

<http://www.tenax.org>

### YAB

A central location, great disco music, live acts and a lively atmosphere draw crowds to this club, which is located behind the arch at Piazza della Repubblica. Monday is reserved for hip-hop and R&B, which attracts a U.S. crowd. Tuesday focuses on house music, and Saturday is always packed. March-September the club is only open Monday and Saturday, beginning at midnight, and dinner is not offered.

Reservations recommended for big-name acts. The 25-euro fixed-price meal served Thursday-Saturday includes entrance to the disco (by reservation only). Otherwise, there's a minimum charge of 10 euros-20 euros (sometimes more for big-name acts).

Via Sassetti 5-R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-215-160

<http://www.yab.it>

## Live Music

### Girasol Cafe

Run by a young Brazilian, this is one of the most exclusive Latin bars in town. It offers live entertainment and tropical cocktails as well as pizza and Argentine beef. Expect Latin and bossa nova sounds.

Daily 7 pm-3 am.

Via del Romito 1-R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 55-474-948

<http://www.girasol.it>

## Performing Arts

Because Florence isn't a large metropolitan city, its entertainment options are limited, with the exception of classical music. Jazz and ethnic music are slowly catching up.

A noteworthy classical event is the annual Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, which offers the best in opera, concerts and ballet, with performers from all over the world. It runs April-June at locations throughout the city. <http://www.maggiofiorentino.com>.

The Comunale also hosts a fall opera season September-December.

Major internationally recognized pop and rock bands frequently stop in Florence during their tours. English-language theatrical productions are rare, with the exception of occasional top-notch U.S. musicals on tour. In general, theater tickets are available from the theaters' own ticket offices. Most performances take place at Teatro Verdi.

The season for all sorts of local music, dance and theater starts in November and ends in May or June. Of course, summer is the domain of street musicians, whose quality may vary widely. Piazza della Repubblica and Piazza del Signore are typical spots to find a classical trio or an opera singer.

You may stumble across a chamber-music or opera concert just by walking into one of the town's many churches. Some of the best-known are the organ concerts given daily except Monday in the church of Santa Maria dei Ricci and the Orchestra da Camera Fiorentino in San Jacopo Sopr'Arno Church.

For concert listings, check the the local papers *La Nazione* or *La Repubblica*.

## Music

### Amici della Musica

This organization hosts classical concerts, chamber music and recitals on Saturday afternoon at La Pergola theater in Via della Pergola. Most events are sold out to season subscription holders, but a few are open to the public, and it is also worth inquiring about tickets that have been turned in. It also produces the Settembre Musica, a music festival that gives exposure to young or unknown artists throughout the month of September.

September-March. Single tickets cost 12 euros-25 euros.

Via Pier Capponi 41  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-609-012 or 055-607-440

<http://www.amicimusica.fi.it>

### O.R.T. Orchestra della Toscana

This orchestra performs symphonies and the occasional oratorio with guest conductors. Concerts are at major concert halls and theaters in town: Teatro Verdi is a favorite.

The concert season usually runs November-May.

Via Verdi 5  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-234-0710

<http://www.orchestradellatoscana.it>

## Opera

Productions are frequently staged at Teatro Comunale, Corso Italia 16, and other venues. The season runs early September through early February.

## Ticket Brokers

### The Box Office

A reliable source for tickets to all sorts of sporting events, concerts and dance or theater offerings.

Monday-Friday 10 am-7:30 pm, Saturday 9 am-2 pm.

Via Alamanni 39/R (near the central train station)

Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-210-804

<http://www.boxol.it>

## Venues

### Teatro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino

Florence's grandest classical venue, built in 1882 and last renovated in 1957, has approximately 2,000 seats. For the best acoustics, choose seats in the second gallery. People who prefer to show off pay dearly for the boxes, called *palchi*. The theater employs a full orchestra and chorus (with Zubin Mehta as principal conductor), plus a ballet company.

For tickets and information, visit the administrative office Tuesday-Friday 10 am-1 pm and 2-5 pm.

Corso Italia 16, Santa Maria Novella  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-277-9350

<http://www.maggioflorentino.com>

### Teatro Verdi

Beautifully renovated, but with uncomfortable designer seats, the city's largest theater is the home of the Orchestra della Toscana. Musicals, light comedies and dance shows are staged there. The ticket office is at Via Ghibellina 97 (open Monday-Saturday 10 am-1 pm and 4-7 pm).

Via Ghibellina, Santa Croce  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-212-320

<http://www.teatroverdionline.it>

## Spectator Sports

A major source of discussion among Italians is soccer—a topic they feel very passionate about. It's very much a part of Italian culture. Games take place on Sunday afternoons.

Another spectacular sporting event you shouldn't miss is *calcio storico* (historic football). These Renaissance-era football games—sometimes violent rugby-style games—are held in Piazza Santa Croce select weekends in June. Teams dress in traditional costumes. Tickets aren't required: Just show up early for seats on the bleachers. Visit the website <http://www.calcistoricoflorentino.it/en> for detailed information and history of the sport. Tickets for the finals (held toward the end of June) can be purchased through The Box Office. Phone 055-210-804. <http://www.boxol.it>

## Soccer

### La Fiorentina

Florence's top soccer club was renamed La Florentia after a bankruptcy, but no one could get used to it, so it's now La Fiorentina again. Season runs September-June. When playing at home, Florence's team plays at Stadio Comunale Artemio Franchi. Tickets can be purchased through The Box Office (<http://www.boxol.it>), at the Chiosco degli Sportivi on Via Anselmi and at other authorized sellers identified on the website or through Ticketone. Season runs late August through early May.

Viale M. Fanti 4 (in the Campo di Marte area; take a No. 6 or 10 bus)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-553-2803

<http://en.violachannel.tv>

## Shopping

The city of Florence has always thrived on its mercantile activity and still does today, even though you'll find that Florentine shopkeepers tend to maintain an air of stolid indifference. The city is a shopping mecca, for better or for worse: Just as some visitors feel overwhelmed by the wealth of artistic treasures Florence has to offer, others feel that the pressure to consume overshadows all other experiences.

Shopping at small, independently run Italian stores might be different from what you're used to. It is customary to greet the owner or shopkeeper with the appropriate *buongiorno* or *buona sera* as you enter. Italians treat their shops as an extension of their own homes, and you'll create a better shopping experience if you are friendly and responsive.

One great thing about shopping in Florence is that you can find a craftsman to make just about anything you can dream up—from shoes to stationery, books, clothes and furniture. A local artisan can turn your dream into reality and it may not be as costly as you might expect.

An important shopping (or window-shopping) destination for any visitor is a stroll over Ponte Vecchio, where jewelers still exercise their trade behind fantastic and brilliant display windows. Leather goods are a great buy: Those with little time to search them out should head for the Santa Croce area. (There's a selection of leather souvenirs from an actual leather-making school inside the church of Santa Croce itself—they are well-made with tourists in mind, but can be quite pricey.) The stalls near the Central Market of San Lorenzo in Via dell'Ariento carry wares that are well-made and reasonably priced.

Anything made of colorful Florentine marbled paper makes a nice gift or keepsake. Other popular souvenirs are antique prints depicting the city and the surrounding hills, classic posters from a museum shop and wooden Pinocchio dolls.

The markets of Florence display a vast array of leather goods, and most of it is quality Italian leather; however, there are some cheap imitations slipping in. Be sure to check all the stitching and seams. Remember that under current Italian law, buyers of fake goods are regarded as accomplices to a crime and can be fined on the spot for such purchases.

If you have the time and inclination, browse the shops on such streets as Via Calzaioli, Via del Corso, Via Roma and the upscale Via Strozzi, which leads to Via Tornabuoni, the Fifth Avenue of Florence. Fashion-seekers will find major Italian and European designers—Armani, Ferragamo, Versace, Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Cartier, Hermes and trendy Roberto Cavalli—along Via Tornabuoni and Via della Vigna Nuova.

**Shopping Hours:** Most shops are generally open in winter 9 am-1 pm and 3:30-7:30 pm; in summer, the afternoon hours are 4-8 pm. Some large department stores and supermarkets stay open during the lunch break, as do some shops in the city center. Certain types of shops, such as clothing boutiques, supermarkets and large stores, are closed all day Sunday and on Monday morning.

## Antique Stores

The number of antiques shops has declined over the years, with small bric-a-brac shops being replaced by upmarket, specialized dealers who handle anything from 1600s rarities to art-deco items. There are many shops along Via Maggio and Via Santo Spirito, located in the Oltrarno, near the Ponte Vecchio. Another good place to explore is the Borgo San Frediano as far as the gate tower. You may catch a glimpse of antiques restoration work being carried out in the many workshops hidden in the narrow back streets of Oltrarno. On the north side of the Arno, you'll find antiques shops on Borgo Ognissanti (from Piazza Ognissanti to Piazza Goldoni) and Via de' Fossi.

Most dealers can arrange shipping and give information on rules and regulations governing exporting antiques. A permit may be required for specialized items or for large quantities of merchandise. Archaeological objects and antiquities have severe restrictions on export, and precise documentation of provenance is required. A reputable dealer will be able to tell you whether a permit is required or not.

## Bookstores

### BM American British Bookshop

Great selection of English-language books, many with Italian and Florentine topics.

Tuesday-Saturday 10:30 am-7 pm.

Borgo Ognissanti 4-R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-294-575

<http://www.bmbookshop.com>

### Feltrinelli International

Spread over two floors, there you'll find many works of classic and modern literature, as well as nonfiction texts covering business, politics, cooking and travel. Most materials are in Italian, though there is a small international section. Other branches in Florence are listed on the website.

Monday-Saturday 9 am-7:30 pm.

Via Cavour 12/R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-292-196

<http://www.lafeltrinelli.it>

### Paperback Exchange

Proprietors Emily and Maurizio stock strictly English titles, new and used, fiction and nonfiction, covering most subjects. Many in the expat community trade in all kinds of used books, so you can usually pick up a well-thumbed treasure, although the price may be as high as a new book.

Monday-Friday 9 am-7:30 pm, Saturday 10:30 am-7:30 pm.

Via della Oche 4-R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-293-460

<http://www.papex.it>

## Department Stores

### Coin

A stylish department store with men's and women's clothing and footwear, household furnishings, cosmetics and more. A good place to shop for larger sizes, which are often hard to come by in Italy.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-8 pm, Sunday 10:30 am-8 pm.

Via dei Calzaiuoli 56-R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-280-531

<http://www.coin.it>

### La Rinascente

Cosmetics, fashion accessories, lingerie, kitchenware and two floors of classic men's and women's clothing, with Missoni knitwear and Versace home furnishings. Great selection of perfumes. Do not miss the great view from the roof terrace, where you can have a coffee.

Monday-Saturday 9 am-9 pm, Sunday 10:30 am-8:30 pm.

Piazza della Repubblica 1  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-219-113

<http://www.rinascente.it>

### Oviesse Firenze

Sells reasonably priced clothing for men, women and children. It will handle the paperwork for IVA tax refunds for tourists returning to non-European Union countries. There is a second central location at Via Nazionale 29/R (phone 055-215-346).

Monday-Saturday 9 am-7:30 pm, Sunday 10 am-7:30 pm.

Via Panzani 31/R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-239-8963

<http://www.ovs.it>

## Factory Outlets

Many factories where goods are produced (*fabbrica*) are near Florence. It's easiest to rent a car or to take a regional train to the nearest stop and continue by taxi for most locations. CAF Prestige Rent also offers an outlet-shopping tour.  
<https://www.prestigerent.com/tours/florence-tuscany/outlets-shopping>.

### Dolce & Gabbana

Prices on its ultrafashionable clothing and accessories are usually 50% off boutique prices.

Monday-Saturday 9 am-7 pm, Sunday 10 am-7 pm.

Via S. Maria Maddalena 49 (about 20 mi/30 km southwest of Florence)  
Florence, Italy

### I Pellettieri d'Italia

A clearing house for the cool, sleek stylings of Prada and its associated lines, Miu Miu and Helmut Lang.

Sunday-Friday 10:30 am-7:30 pm, Saturday 9:30 am-8 pm; open 10 am-12:30 pm in December.

Localita Levanello 68-A (about 30 mi/50 km southwest of Florence)  
Montevarchi, Italy

### The Mall Outlet Center

This mall, a 30-minute drive outside Florence, has outlets for most major Italian designers, including Gucci, Bottega Veneta, Armani, Fendi, Ungaro, Ferragamo, Valentino and many more. You can reach it by shuttle bus or by train.

Daily 10 am-7 pm. Stays open until 8 pm June-August.

Via Europa 8, Leccio Reggello  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-865-7775 for information

<http://www.themall.it>

## Markets

### Mercato delle Cascine

If bargains are your thing, don't miss this famous Tuesday-morning market which the locals call "Il Mercatone." You'll find clothing, sheets, towels, kitchenware, wicker, lingerie, perfume and food for sale. Much of the clothing is tatty, but keep an eye out for the occasional brand-name item at knock-down prices. Keep a close eye on your wallet or purse, too: Pickpockets and purse snatchers frequent the market. The market stretches for about 1 mi/1.6 km along the banks of the Arno River, from Ponte della Vittoria to Ponte all'Indiano.

Tuesday 8 am-2 pm.

(take a No. 17-C bus to the center of the park, which is the far end of the market)  
Florence, Italy

### Mercato delle Pulci

Florence's flea market, where you'll find some really off-the-wall items.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-5 pm.

Piazza Annigoni (a little east of the city center)  
Florence, Italy

### Mercato di San Lorenzo

Probably the most popular market in town, it's much more tourist-oriented than the Cascine market, partly because of its location. On sale are leather jackets, bags, costume jewelry, scarves, belts and small gift items. Prices are fairly reasonable, and the leather goods are well-made. (Check for natural suede inside and "Made in Italy" stamped on real leather and not a postage-stamp-sized square attached to fake leather.) Visit the indoor fresh-produce market, which is an enjoyable experience even if you're not buying anything. You can also get a meal inside the market at the famous Nerbone, or picnic fixings from Perini.

The outdoor stalls are open daily 9 am-7:30 pm in summer, Tuesday-Sunday 9 am-7:30 pm in winter. The indoor food market is open Monday-Saturday 7 am-2 pm year-round.

Piazza del Mercato Centrale (near Piazza San Lorenzo)  
Florence, Italy

### Mercato Nuovo

Also called the Mercato del Porcellino, after the bronze boar statue—rub his snout and you'll be sure to return to Florence. Look for intricate handmade embroidery and lace, many straw articles and Florentine wood carvings, together with good-quality leather goods at reasonable prices.

Tuesday-Sunday 9 am-7:30 pm, till 8 pm in summer.

Loggia Mercato Nuovo (north of Ponte Vecchio)  
Florence, Italy

## Specialty Stores

### Bartolucci

The Bartolucci family has been handcrafting wooden toys since 1981, with their inspiration starting from the carving of a wooden Pinocchio puppet. Their business actually began in the 1930s with the manufacture of accordions. The shop produces small toys, pencil holders, clocks, Pinocchio dolls and more, all carved from pine wood and painted by hand.

Daily 9 am-7:30 pm.

Via Condotta 12/R  
Florence, Italy  
**Phone:** 055-211-773  
<http://www.bartolucci.com>

### Bojola

Chic, high-quality leather goods produced by an established Florentine company.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-7:30 pm.

Via dei Rondinelli 25-R (at the top of Via Tornabuoni, just a few minutes south of the Santa Maria Novella train station)  
Florence, Italy  
**Phone:** 055-211-155  
<http://www.bojola.it>

### Borsalino

The Ferrari of hats, most famous for men's hats of all types. In the summer, a light straw version is a classy alternative to a baseball cap.

Monday-Saturday 9:30 am-7:30 pm.

Via Porta Rossa 40/R  
Florence, Italy  
**Phone:** 055-280-671  
<http://www.borsalino.it>

### **Bottiglieria Bussotti**

In operation since 1937, this *enoteca* sells domestic and imported wines, along with a variety of Tuscan culinary specialties such as truffle sauces and locally produced olive oil. Shipping services are available.

Monday-Saturday 8:30 am-1 pm and 4-7:30 pm. Hours change in July and August, so check ahead during those months.

Via San Gallo 161/R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-483-091

<http://www.enotecabussotti.it>

### **Casa dei Tessuti**

An old-fashioned shop and museum run by the Romoli family and founded in 1929 by Egisto Romoli. Precious fabrics are exhibited from the Renaissance and other periods, and twice a week they run a school for Italian and foreign designers where they can learn about textiles and the art of drapery. You can even order a fully custom-made shirt or jacket for a one-of-a-kind souvenir.

Monday 9 am-1 pm; Tuesday-Saturday 9 am-1 pm and 3-7 pm.

Via dei Pecori 20-24/R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-215-961

<http://www.casadeitessuti.com>

### **Dolcissima Firenze**

This tiny shop on the Oltrarno side sells delectable handmade chocolates, truffles and delicious tiny pastries. Novelty chocolates are decorated according to the season—for example, there are lavishly decorated eggs at Easter.

Tuesday-Saturday 7:45 am-8 pm.

Via Maggio 61-R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-239-6268

<http://www.dolcissimafirenze.it>

### **Enoteca Alessi**

A great selection of Tuscan and other wines, along with *vin santo* and grappa. There is a tasting room, and shipping services are available.

Monday-Saturday 9 am-7:30 pm, tasting room from 11:30 am.

Via delle Oche 27-31/R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-214-966

<http://www.enotecaalessi.com>

### **Enoteca Per Bacco**

This Florentine wine shop carries a large selection of top-flight Tuscan and other domestic wines, along with imports, champagne and *spumanti*. Shipping services available.

Daily 10:30 am-8 pm.

Via Borgo Santissimi Apostoli 21-23/R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-292-646

<http://www.perbaccofirenze.it>

### **Farmacia di Santa Maria Novella**

A shopping adventure where you can explore a whole range of soaps, perfumes and herbal cures in what looks like a medieval apothecary. It's in a beautiful 400-year-old building that alone is worth the visit.

Daily 9 am-8 pm.

Via della Scala 16  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-216-276

<http://www.smnovella.it>

### Fiori del Tempo

Walking into this workshop, about the size of an elevator, is like stepping into a jewelry box crammed with gorgeous confections of precious and semi-precious stones, pearls, gold and silver. The pieces are uniquely created by Francesco Deidda, and are reasonably priced. There is a second location at Via del Corso 31/R.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-7:30 pm.

Via dei Ginori 27-R  
Florence, Italy

### Il Papiro

This company's exquisite handmade, marbled Florentine paper and other stationery make wonderful presents. Additional locations throughout the city, including a stall at the San Lorenzo market.

Piazza Duomo 24-R  
Florence, Italy  
**Phone:** 055-281-628  
<http://www.ilpapirofirenze.it>

### Le Sorelle

Near the Ponte Vecchio, this family-run shop overlooks the Arno river and features beautiful block-printed linens and napkins, handmade soaps and other gift items.

Daily 9:30 am-7:30 pm.

Via Borgo San Jacopo 30  
Florence, Italy  
**Phone:** 055-216-223  
<http://www.lesorelle.toscana.it>

### Loretta Caponi

This shop is an icon of Florentine taste. It carries exquisite lace, embroidered clothing, children's clothing and household linens. Pricey but unparalleled in quality. A second shop is at Via delle Belle Donne 28/R, Florence. Phone 055-211-074

Piazza Antinori 4-R  
Florence, Italy  
**Phone:** 055-211-074  
<http://www.lorettacaponi.com>

### Officine Panerai

Collectors across the world seek out this shop's legendary luxury watches (3,000 euros-25,000 euros), which were first produced—in limited quantities—for the Italian Navy during World War II.

Monday 4-7 pm, Tuesday-Saturday 10 am-7 pm, Sunday 3-7 pm.

Piazza San Giovanni 14-R (near the  
Church of San Giovanni Battista, next to  
the Duomo)  
Florence, Italy  
**Phone:** 055-215-795  
<http://www.panerai.com>

### Otto D'Ame

Young, hip, unique street fashion. Beautiful clothing that you don't see anywhere else—beautiful fabrics such as linens, cotton, silks, done up in more casual styles.

Daily 9:30 am-7:30 pm.

Via della Spada 19-R  
Florence, Italy  
**Phone:** 055-265-4100  
<http://www.ottodame.it>

### Papini Pelletterie

Founded in the late 19th century, this shop sells leather suitcases, bags and purses, some with map prints and all of them quite elaborate.

Monday noon-6:30 pm, Tuesday-Saturday 9:30 am-6 pm.

Lungarno Archibusieri 10-12/R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-287-879

<http://www.papinileather.com>

### Passamaneria Toscana

If rich brocades and beautiful Renaissance upholstery fabrics are your passion, head for this shop, located in the 14th-century Palazzo della Stufa. It sells fabric, hand-woven wall tapestries and some pre-sewn items, such as gold-braid-trimmed cushions.

Monday-Saturday 9:30 am-1 pm and 3-7:30 pm, Sunday 10 am-1 pm and 3-7:30 pm.

Via dei Conti 49-51/R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-214-670

<http://www.passamaneriatoscana.com>

### Scuola del Cuio

This leather school began as a collaboration between the monks of Santa Croce and the Gori leather-making family after World War II with the goal of providing a sustainable trade for young people. The main attraction is the opportunity to see craftspeople as they work inside the monastery, and the shop sells leather accessories as well as a limited selection of leather apparel. Artisans are in the shop Monday-Friday 10 am-5:30 pm.

Fall and winter Monday-Friday 10 am-6 pm, Saturday 10:30 am-6 pm. Spring and summer daily 10 am-6 pm.

Piazza di Santa Croce 16 (to access the workshop walk through the church of Santa Croce)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-244-533

<http://www.scuoladelcuio.com/index.php>

## Itinerary

## Day Trips

To **Fiesole**. This small, picturesque town in the hills above Florence has important Roman and Etruscan archaeological sites, including a Roman amphitheater. There are also good restaurants, a cathedral and an archaeological museum. Fiesole is just a 20-minute ride from Florence on a No. 7 bus from Piazza San Marco, the Duomo or Santa Maria Novella station. (It runs every 20 minutes 8 am-8 pm, then every half-hour until midnight.)

To **Pistoia**. Just 19 mi/30 km west of Florence, this town gave its name to the pistol. A Renaissance gem, Pistoia seems like a more compact Florence. From the train station, follow signs to the Piazza del Duomo, a 10- to 25-minute walk after a 50-minute train ride. Once you're there, there's really no need to move around much; Pistoia delights in advertising its "seven museums within 100 meters," and they're all around the Piazza del Duomo and its 12th-century San Zeno Cathedral and Gothic Baptistery of San Giovanni in Corte.

To **Montecatini Terme**. A 40-minute train ride from Florence takes you to the spa town of Montecatini Terme. Health and beauty treatments are found all over town, and a funicular railway will take you up to Montecatini Alto, where you can sit at a cafe and enjoy the views.

To **Siena**. As in Florence, the central part of the city was established in the 12th century. The cathedral and Palazzo Pubblico (city hall) are particularly impressive. The best way to get to Siena from Florence is with the SITA bus. The direct route (*corsa rapida*) takes 90 minutes from the heart of Florence to the heart of Siena. Buses leave once or twice an hour, depending on the time of day, starting at 6:30 am (last bus back is 8:30 pm). On Sunday and holidays, buses run less frequently; check beforehand. If you do go by bus, make sure you take the "rapido" direct bus both ways, and that you line up from the back door to get on the bus. The SITA station in Florence is located next to the Santa Maria Novella station, on Via Santa Caterina da Siena. The same bus line that goes to Siena also goes to San Gimignano and Volterra.

To **San Gimignano**. If you want to spend a day in a little medieval city perched on a hill overlooking an expanse of acres/hectares of fields filled with olive trees and vineyards, San Gimignano is the place. But be warned: It can be inundated with hordes of tourists, especially in summer. Round-trip service is available daily on the SITA bus line, located on Via Santa Caterina da Siena near the Santa Maria Novella train station in Florence. <http://www.sitabus.it>.

To **Lucca**. Lucca, the birthplace of Giacomo Puccini, is a bit far for a day trip, but a fast train will get you there from Florence in 70 minutes. The draw there is Lucca's 16th-century walls, which encircle the city and have kept modern urban sprawl away from the historic center.

To **Pisa**. The Leaning Tower of Pisa (Torre di Pisa), once a highlight of the Grand Tour, has always been near the top of many travelers' must-see lists. Climbing the 294 dizzying, worn steps is truly a surreal experience. Other worthwhile sights in Pisa are the Romanesque cathedral, the Camposanto Cemetery and the Campo dei Miracoli, an enormous, grassy piazza adjacent to the tower. Trains run frequently between Florence and Pisa. The trip takes about an hour.

## Local Tours

### CAF Incoming Tours

Bus tours of Tuscany and the Chianti region, day and evening tours of Florence, a tour of the Medici villas outside the city, outlet-shopping tours, and trips to Rome and Venice.

Tours offered daily. Monday-Saturday 8 am-7 pm, Sunday and holidays 8 am-3 pm. Rates vary.

Via degli Alfani 151 (near the Uffizi)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-210-612 or 055-282-200

<http://www.caftours.com>

### Citysightseeing

The city of Florence has its own sightseeing tour buses. They are red double-deckers with open tops, and you can hop on and off at one of 16 major tourist attractions. Look for signs marked *Citysightseeing*, which also list the schedule. Buses leave from Florence's central train station and run every half-hour year-round.

Daily 9 am-6:30 pm (open till 6 pm in April, till 10 pm in summer). Purchase tickets onboard: 25 euros adults (valid for 48 hours). Optional audio commentary is free. .

Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-290-451

<http://www.firenze.city-sightseeing.it>

## Context Travel

For a more scholarly tour, Context offers interesting walking tours covering various aspects of Florentine art, cuisine and history. You can learn about the daily life of Renaissance Florentines or take a fresco workshop.

Cost varies with the length of the tour. .

Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 800-691-6036

<http://www.contexttravel.com/city/Florence>

## Guided Florence Tours

Customized itineraries as well as private and group tours of Florence.

A two-hour group tour for a minimum of five people and maximum of 10 is around 35 euros. A two-day customized itinerary is 25 euros.

Via Nazionale 24

Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-463-1672

<http://www.guidedflorence.com>

## Tuscany Bike Tours

Had enough of museums, churches and crowds? Join this outfit for a full-day bike tour of the Chianti region, or a full-day Vespa tour of the surrounding countryside. Both include a tour of a 12th-century castle, tour of a wine cellar and olive oil facility, and a three-course lunch at a family-run restaurant.

Tours are run daily from 10 am-5 pm.

Via Ghibellina 34-R (a three-minute walk from Piazza Santa Croce)

Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-386-0253

<http://www.tuscany-biketours.com>

## Walking Tours of Florence

Offers personalized walking tours of Florence and of other parts of Tuscany, as well as wine, gourmet, artisans' workshops and shopping tours.

Monday-Saturday 8 am-6 pm. 25 euros adults.

Via Sassetti 1 (north of Ponte Vecchio)

Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-264-5033

<http://www.italy.artviva.com>

# Dining

## Dining Overview

Florentines, like people of other regions of Italy, are very proud of their cuisine. "Italian cooking" as such does not exist—Florentine, Roman and Milanese cuisines do. In Florence, you might say that the cuisine mirrors the character of the city's inhabitants: no-frills, solid and dignified.

*Bistecca alla fiorentina* is a traditional thick, high-quality, grilled T-bone steak served very rare. But steak was not a large part of the diet of the people whose culinary arts made Florentine cooking what it is today. The staple fare was stick-to-the-ribs, vegetable-based soups served with a drizzle of olive oil on top. Among the soups, two traditional Florentine favorites are *pappa al pomodoro* (tomato, basil and bread soup) and *ribollita* (bean and vegetable soup with bread).

Porcini mushrooms, a real delicacy, are a staple in *risotto ai funghi porcini* (risotto with porcini mushrooms), *tagliatelle ai funghi porcini* (egg pasta with porcini sauce) and *porcini alla griglia* (grilled porcini caps). And it would be a disservice not to elaborate on haricot beans when talking about Tuscan food. Classic preparations include cooking with fresh sage and tomato (*fagioli all'uccelletto*) or with sausage (*fagioli e salsiccia*). The prosaic sound of these dishes belies their irresistible flavor.

Tuscany is undeniably one of the greatest wine-producing regions in the world. Chianti is the most ubiquitous, although quality can vary. Deviation from Chianti's traditional recipe guidelines has given rise to a new regionally specific classification called "Super Tuscan" you should try. In addition to sampling the Chianti, you should not leave without tasting the exquisite and expensive Brunello di Montalcino or the

more moderately priced, but very good, *Vino Nobile di Montepulciano*.

Navigating the seas of Florentine dining spots—from the inexpensive *fiaschetteria* to the pricey *enoteca*, from the *ristorante* to the trattoria and pizzeria—can be as bewildering as it is exhilarating. Once upon a time, the trattoria was an everyday establishment offering simple, hearty fare. Nowadays, because the charm of these places has acquired a price tag, a meal in a well-known trattoria may be just as elegant and expensive as one in a *ristorante*.

Pizzerias frequently offer a whole gamut of choices, from steak to fish, but it's worth remembering that the pizzeria's specialty is pizza—usually cooked in a wood-burning oven. In Florence, pizza is baked in large rectangular baking sheets, and you decide the size of your slice. Price is by weight.

The *fiaschetteria* and *enoteca* are specialized wine shops that frequently serve light meals, including sandwiches made with *porchetta* (roast pork), soup and crostini. If you'd like to try a takeout specialty and are not too squeamish, try a *lampredotto* or tripe sandwich from one of the tripe stands (*trippaic*) in the markets of San Lorenzo, San Ambrogio or Il Porcellino.

The trend for people who work in the city to have lunch near their workplace rather than at home has meant a surge in inexpensive lunch places. Paradoxically, the same restaurant may offer the identical menu for dinner that it does for lunch, but at double the price. Also, in order to be competitive at lunchtime, elegant cafes will provide a splendid buffet lunch for the same price as their scruffier counterparts.

Italians don't usually bother with breakfast (apart from a cappuccino and maybe a pastry). However, some of the hipper bars and restaurants now offer what they call an English or American breakfast or even an American-style Sunday brunch.

Most restaurants open for lunch noon-2:30 pm, with the rush 1-2 pm. Dinner hours begin at 7 pm at the very earliest (more typically at 7:30 pm) and continue until at least 10 pm; many places stay open until midnight. Florentines dine punctually at 8:30 pm, so if you want to enjoy your meal at a quieter time or avoid lines, plan to dine a bit earlier.

Here is a sampling of restaurants in town. Expect to pay the following for dinner for one, excluding drinks and tip: \$ = less than 20 euros; \$\$ = 20 euros-35 euros; \$\$\$ = 36 euros-65 euros; \$\$\$\$ = more than 65 euros.

## Local & Regional

### Cantinetta Antinori

Wine bar and restaurant managed by the Antinori family, which has been producing wines since 1385. Savor locally produced wine, olive oil and goat cheese, along with other Tuscan dishes, in the small but elegant restaurant.

Monday-Friday for lunch and dinner. Closed in August and the week of Christmas. Reservations recommended. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Piazza degli Antinori 3-R (near Stazione Santa Maria Novella)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-292-234

<http://www.cantinetta-antinori.com/it/firenze>

### Cantinetta dei Verrazzano

This elegant *enoteca* was created by the family that owns Castello da Verrazzano, a well-known Chianti producer. The atmosphere is warm and charming—terra-cotta floors, marble counters and dark wood furnishings. The location—a stone's throw from Palazzo Vecchio and the Duomo—couldn't be better. Make a light lunch or dinner out of a good wine and warm focaccia baked on the premises with thyme and pecorino (sheep's-milk cheese) or porcini mushrooms.

Monday-Saturday 8 am-4:30 pm. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Via dei Tavolini 18-R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-268-590

<http://www.verrazzano.com/en/the-place>

### Club Culinario Toscano da Osvaldo

The supper club is a great splurge; the owner, Osvaldo, does all the cooking. The menu changes monthly. Wine lovers will appreciate the list of Super Tuscans: Your server will help with choosing one that will go with your meal. Call for reservations; the place is small and popular amongst locals. It's not easy to find, so allow some extra time to get there.

Monday-Saturday for dinner. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$.

Piazza dei Peruzzi 3-R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-217-919

<http://clubosvaldo.com>

### Coco Lezzone

You can eat typical Florentine fare at communal tables in this well-hidden restaurant whose name comes from a dialect phrase meaning "dirty cook." Florentines say the food reminds them of Grandma's home cooking.

Monday-Saturday noon-2:30 pm and 7-10:30 pm. \$\$\$\$. No credit cards.

Via del Parioncino 26-R (near the  
Duomo)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-287-178

<http://www.cocolezzone.it>

### Eataly

This marketplace, restaurant and food experience all in one is part of the slow food movement. It features small-production vendors selling artisanal food products, courses in food and tastings, and other events such as a fruit and vegetable sculpture show. There are small food stations spread across the first and second levels offering food and wine from all producing regions of Italy—including a seafood station, pasta station, meat station, artisanal gelato stand, and a coffee and espresso station featuring regional pastries and desserts.

Daily 9 am-10:30 pm. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Via Martelli 22  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-015-3601

<http://www.firenze.eataly.it>

### Enoteca Pinchiorri

Considered by some to be the best restaurant in Florence and one of the best in Italy. (The prices reflect this: You can spend more than 1,000 euros for a meal if you choose the best wines.) It is part of the Relais & Chateaux chain, and some claim it is now trading on its name to attract foreigners. The food can be overworked, but no one disputes that its wine cellar is still first-class. Choose from Tuscan specialties or more international offerings.

Tuesday-Saturday for dinner, sometimes open for lunch. Reservations required. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Via Ghibellina 87 (near Piazza Santa  
Croce)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-242-757 or 055-242-757

<http://www.enotecapinchiorri.it>

### Enoteca Pitti Gola e Cantina

This charming little *enoteca* offers an excellent selection of fine Chianti reserves, with delicious Tuscan snacks to go with your choice of wine. The restaurant buys its pork from one of Tuscany's most famous meat slayers and man of letters—Dario Cecchini, the so-called "poet butcher" of Chianti. Chef Marzia Sassetti prepares the pasta dough daily and uses only the freshest local ingredients to create classic Tuscan dishes such as braised meats, soups and pastas.

Daily 1 pm-midnight. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Piazza Pitti 16 (in the Oltrarno, across  
the street from Palazzo Pitti)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-212-704

<http://pittigolaecantina.com>

### Harry's Bar

Although the original bar and restaurant is in Venice, Harry's Bar Firenze is considered an elegant second location and is frequented by a dwindling crowd of nostalgics. You'll find classic food there—try the curried chicken breasts or the Milanese-style cutlets.

Daily for lunch and dinner until midnight; closes 3-7 pm. Reservations required. \$\$\$\$ . Most major credit cards.

Lungarno A. Vespucci 22-R (along the river)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-239-6700

<http://www.harrysbarfirenze.com>

### Il Latini

Even though the place is usually packed with tourists, it's still a favorite of Florentine residents and offers communal-style dining at its best. Tuscan meats, especially *bistecca alla fiorentina*, are the specialty, and no one makes *pappa al pomodoro* better. Don't miss the antipasti. Lines can be long.

Tuesday-Sunday 12:30-10:30 pm. Reservations recommended. \$\$ . Most major credit cards.

Via dei Palchetti 6-R (near Piazza Goldoni)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-210-916

<http://www.illatini.com>

### Il Santo Bevitore

A very serious-looking wine bar that doubles as a restaurant with inventive dishes. The great wine cellar includes reasonably priced, good wines.

Monday-Saturday for lunch and dinner, Sunday for lunch only. \$\$ . Visa and MasterCard accepted.

Via Santo Spirito 64-R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-211-264

<http://www.ilsantobevitore.com>

### La Bussola

Great neighborhood trattoria, not far from the Piazza Repubblica, the name of which means "the compass." Excellent grilled stuffed squid, tuna and other fish dishes, as well as grilled meats. Up front is a more casual section serving delicious wood-fired oven pizzas.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$\$-\$\$\$ . Most major credit cards.

Via Porta Rossa 58-R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-293-376

<http://www.labussolafirenze.it>

### La Casalinga

This is one of the best values in the city for a sit-down, well-prepared meal. It has become very popular among locals and tourists alike as a lunch destination—get there before 1 pm and there may be no line. Evenings are less crowded. The lasagna will make your mouth water, and save room for some dessert sorbet.

Monday-Saturday for lunch and dinner. Closed for three weeks in August and the week of Christmas. Reservations recommended. Most major credit cards.

Via dei Michelozzi 9-R (on the Piazza Santo Spirito, two minutes from Palazzo Pitti)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-218-624

<http://www.trattorialacasalinga.it>

### La Grotta Guelfa

Charming restaurant tucked away in a small square not far from the Piazza Repubblica, this place is always teeming with locals. It specializes in *bistecca*, *ossobuco*, grilled meats, pastas and soups, all with exceptionally fresh, high-quality ingredients. Good service as well, and a nice roomy outdoor terrace.

Daily noon-10:30 pm. Reservations recommended. \$\$-\$\$\$ . Most major credit cards.

Via Pellicceria 5-R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-210-042

<http://www.grottaguelfa.it>

### La Reggia degli Etruschi

The menu at this tried-and-true eatery is based on Tuscan classics with a modern twist. (Fun fact: The owner was a former chef for the Florentine soccer club and is a former soccer player.) House specialties include the carpaccio of local heritage *cinta senese*, beef filet wrapped in cured *lardo* and smothered in a grape sauce. Most meat on the menu comes from the owner's butcher shop.

Via San Francesco 18  
Fiesole, Italy

### Lo Strettoio

This Tuscan restaurant is in a restored olive-oil processing center built in the 16th century. The press is the centerpiece of the dining room. Located a short drive from the city center, it has stunningly beautiful views of Florence from the terrace. There is an excellent wine selection and a *grapperia* with more than 200 varieties of grappa.

Via di Serpiolle 7  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-425-0044

<http://www.lostrettoio-tuscanrestaurant.com>

Tuesday-Saturday for lunch and dinner, Sunday for lunch only. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

### Osteria Cipolla Rossa

This attractive restaurant, tucked away on a side street near the Medici Chapel, is about locally sourced meat and vegetables combined in some not-so-traditional ways. The namesake red onions appear vinegar-macerated atop a perfectly grilled pork chop, creating a fabulous contrast with the richness of the pork. The pastas are equally interesting.

Via dei Conti 53-R  
Florence, Italy

Wednesday-Monday for lunch and dinner. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Visa and MasterCard accepted.

### Osteria del Cinghiale Bianco

This place in the Oltrarno, close to Ponte Vecchio, is always packed in the evenings, with good reason. Its excellent Tuscan cuisine is complemented by an intimate yet unpretentious atmosphere—stone walls from the 14th century illuminated by candlelight. Don't miss the *strozzapreti* (literally, "priest chokers"), light and delicate spinach dumplings. For the adventurous, we recommend homemade egg noodles (*pappardelle*) in wild boar sauce (the *cinghiale* of the restaurant's name). Desserts are all homemade, including the mascarpone cream served with a buttery biscuit.

Borgo San Jacopo 43-R  
Florence, Italy

Monday-Friday for dinner, Saturday and Sunday for lunch and dinner. Reservations required. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

### Osteria di Giovanni

This restaurant near the Arno is a Buon Ricordo Ristorante. That means they'll send you home with a commemorative Buon Ricordo plate for the signature dish, squab stuffed with fennel sausage and kale (*Piccione del Valdarno*). It's very good, as is the tortelli stuffed with pear and pecorino cheese with leeks and sweet paprika.

Via del Moro 22  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-284-897

<http://www.osteriadigiovanni.com>

Monday-Friday for dinner, Saturday and Sunday for lunch and dinner. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$.

### Relais le Jardin

The atmosphere at this charming place is both refined and intimate, thanks to two small, attractive dining rooms—one overlooking the garden. Service is excellent, and most importantly, the food is of the highest quality. The Tuscan and Italian menu changes every two weeks to accommodate seasonal variations in ingredients. House-made pasta and desserts are a constant, as is the excellent selection of wines.

Piazza Massimo D'Azeglio 3 (in the  
Regency Hotel)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-245-247

<http://www.regency-hotel.com/restaurant>

Daily for lunch and dinner. Reservations recommended for lunch, required for dinner. \$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

### Sostanza-Troia Dal 1869

This tiny trattoria is known as "Il Troia" (the trough) because of its long, wooden communal tables. It has a long history, as you might guess from the faded photos of prominent guests that cover the walls. Nothing could be less pretentious than the atmosphere and the country-style home cooking. Try the vegetable soup (*zuppa alla paesana*), the homemade tortellini and the boiled meats. This trattoria attracts an international clientele. The first dinner seating is popular with tourists, but for a more authentic experience book the second seating, which is popular with locals.

Monday-Friday for lunch and dinner; closed 2-7:30 pm. Closed during the month of August. Also open Saturday for lunch and dinner in April, May, September and October. Reservations highly recommended for dinner. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. No credit cards.

Via della Porcellana 25-R (a few blocks south of Stazione Santa Maria Novella)  
Florence, Italy

### Taverna del Bronzino

Taverna del Bronzino is an elegant, understated restaurant in the San Marco area. It was the art studio of the painter Bronzino's student, Santo di Tito, in the 16th century. The outstanding cuisine varies between Florentine and international and is considered unequalled for fish dishes. Attentive service, beautiful presentation and a great choice of wines add to the experience.

Monday-Friday for lunch and dinner, Saturday for lunch only. Reservations recommended. Business dress. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Via delle Ruote 27/R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-495-220

<http://www.tavernadelbronzino.com>

### Terrazza 45

Swanky, wine-bar-style dining with a thoughtful gourmet menu, solid wine selection and a great view. Inventive starters and first courses, as well as more traditional meat- and fish-based main dishes. The menu features several specialties made with truffles, pork cheek, tempura *baccala* and homemade mayonnaise, modern Tuscan souffles and house-made desserts.

Mino da Fiesole 45  
Fiesole, Italy

### Trattoria Angiolino

The friendly staff and reliably delicious food make this old-style trattoria an unfailingly pleasant place to dine. Among the pastas, the *penne all'Angiolino* (pasta with tomato, meat and red-wine sauce) is an institution. The kitchen also makes a mouthwatering, massive *bistecca alla fiorentina*. For vegetarians, the dish of fried artichokes and other vegetables is a house specialty.

Tuesday-Saturday for lunch and dinner, Sunday for lunch. Reservations highly recommended for dinner. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Via Trento 739  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-873-9438

<http://www.trattoriaangiolino.it>

### Trattoria Gabriello

A typical, lovely trattoria, open since 1858, that is very popular among locals. Home-style, Florentine favorites with specials changing daily. The *melanzane alla parmigiana* (eggplant parmesan) is to die for.

Daily for lunch and dinner. \$-\$\$\$. No credit cards.

Via Condotta 54-R  
Florence, Italy

### Trattoria Mario

A favorite among locals and foreigners alike, Mario is as much theater as restaurant. The cooks in the glass-enclosed kitchen, the friendly service and the crowds sitting at communal tables create a festive atmosphere. Its location, in the heart of the colorful San Lorenzo market district, is a plus. Friday is fish day (the grilled salmon is heavenly).

Monday-Saturday noon-3:30 pm. Closed during the month of August. Reservations not accepted. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Via Rosina 2-R (near Stazione Santa  
Maria Novella)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-218-550

<http://trattoria-mario.com>

### Vinandro Fiesole

Traditional, homestyle trattoria serving simple Italian fare. It offers roasted vegetables, *frittura* (various fried foods), Tuscan chicken-liver crostini, fresh pastas, jugs of house wine, roasted pork and chestnut-flour-based desserts. Affordable, rustic fare in a *vineria* setting.

Piazza Mino 33  
Fiesole, Italy

### Vini e Vecchi Sappori

This little gem of a trattoria is steps away from the Piazza della Signoria, near the same side as the Gucci Museum. It's a family affair: Tomasso manages the place, his mom cooks and his *babbo* tends the bar. You'll need a reservation, but even if you have one, be prepared to wait, as the locals tend to linger there, savoring the delicious food. Try the tagliatini with duck ragout or the *carciofi ripieni* (stuffed artichokes) and have a glass of the excellent house Chianti.

Thursday-Tuesday for lunch and dinner. Reservations required. No credit cards.

Via dei Magazzini 3-R  
Florence, Italy

## Cuisines

### Asian

#### India

Specializing in northern Indian (tandoori and Mughlai) cuisine, this restaurant in Fiesole is an unusual find in this part of the world. It's an exact replica of a roadside Indian restaurant.

Wednesday-Monday for dinner. Reservations recommended. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Via Gramsci 43-R  
Fiesole, Italy

**Phone:** 055-599-900

<http://www.ristoranteindia.it>

#### Kome

With a Japanese sushi bar downstairs and an excellent barbecue grill upstairs, Kome is a very popular dinner spot.

Daily for dinner. Reservations required for the barbecue grill.. Reservations recommended. \$\$-\$\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Via dei Benci 41-R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-200-8009

<http://www.komefirenze.it>

## Osir

The low prices and very good dishes (the excellent Beijing duck should be ordered a day in advance) make this popular Chinese restaurant worth the long walk from the city center, although the service is hit-or-miss. A note to those who don't speak Italian: The pictures on the menu don't always correspond to the dishes they are advertising.

Tuesday-Sunday noon-midnight. Reservations required. \$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Viale Lavagnini 22-R (1 mi/1.6 km from Stazione Santa Maria Novella following Via Nazionale)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-474-942

<http://www.ristoranteosir.it>

## Mediterranean

### Rose's

Rose's is a pleasant and conveniently central restaurant-cum-art gallery (just off boutique-lined Via Tornabuoni) to stop off for a drink or a light pasta lunch. It's much-favored by students and Florence's young professionals.

Daily noon-3:30 pm and 7 pm-1:30 am. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Via Parione 26-R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-287-090

<http://www.roses.it>

## Vegetarian

### Il Vegetariano

Florence's first vegetarian restaurant has the classic vegan-restaurant feel with brick walls and rough wooden tables and chairs. Go to the counter and make your menu choices from the internationally inspired selections. The menu changes daily but always includes a vegan dish. Pasta, soup, couscous, quiche, salads, *seitan* and tofu are on offer, as well as organic beer, wine, fruit juice and an amazing number of herbal teas. Don't miss the desserts. Smoke-free room and summer dining in the garden.

Tuesday-Sunday for lunch and dinner. It can get crowded, so go early. Closed for several weeks in August and the week of Christmas. Reservations not accepted. \$-\$\$\$. No credit cards.

Via delle Ruote 30-R (off Via Santa Reparata near Piazza dell'Indipendenza)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-475-030

<http://www.il-vegetariano.it>

### Ruth's

Serves kosher vegetarian food in a family-friendly atmosphere, as well as a few fish dishes. Almost next door to the synagogue, it's under the supervision of the chief rabbi. Offerings include pita filled with falafel or *kefte*, salad, bagels and couscous. Meat is available on request.

Sunday-Thursday for lunch and dinner, Friday for lunch. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Via Luigi Carlo Farini 2-R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-248-0888

<http://www.kosheruth.com>

## Cafes & Tearooms

Cafes in the center of Florence may offer a choice of table service or ordering at the bar. Table-service prices are higher, but sometimes it's worth spending the extra money to take a load off your feet or just to sit and people-watch. These places offer an array of sandwiches, savory snacks, cakes, tea and coffee. Some now have lunch offerings, too.

### Giacosa

A smart cafe right off Via Tornabuoni, owned by fashion designer Roberto Cavalli, this is the perfect place for a light lunch or a superb cappuccino—even an excellent cocktail. It serves a delicious assortment of little sandwiches, olives and cheese when you order an alcoholic drink. A great place to take a break from shopping.

Monday-Friday 7:30 am-10:30 pm, Saturday 8 pm-2 am, Sunday 12:30-8:30 pm. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Via della Spada 10-R (corner of Via  
Tornabuoni)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-277-6328

<http://www.caffegiacosa.it>

### Giubbe Rosse

In the large Piazza della Repubblica, this outdoor cafe, once famous as the literary hangout of writers, poets, artists and intellectuals, has an excellent lunch buffet with pasta as a first course, and hot and cold main courses. It also serves an "American breakfast."

Daily 8 am-midnight. \$-\$\$.

Piazza della Repubblica 13-14/R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-212-280

<http://www.giubberosse.it>

### Procacci

This jewel, once a haunt of Richard Burton, Elizabeth Taylor and Grace Kelly, was founded in 1885. Order the traditional truffle sandwich and a cool glass of *vernaccia*. It also serves tea.

Monday-Saturday 10 am-8 pm. \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Via Tornabuoni 64-R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-211-656

<http://www.procacci1885.it/en/florence>

### Rivoire

This famous cafe, founded in 1872, is the "in" place for intellectuals, politicians and visiting celebrities from all over Italy and the world. The best cappuccino in town (about 1 euro standing, about 4.75 euros seated) and a wonderful selection of delicious pastries and chocolates. The Sicilian cannoli are exceptional here. Light lunches are available. Cocktails and *aperitivi*, too. There is a view of the Palazzo Vecchio from the outdoor tables in front.

Tuesday-Sunday 7 am-midnight (until 9 pm in winter). \$-\$\$\$. Most major credit cards.

Via Vacchereccia 4-R (in the Piazza della  
Signoria)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-214-412

<http://www.rivoire.it>

## Other Options

If you like ice cream, Italian gelato can be a little bit of heaven. Italians make a late-afternoon or early-evening habit of it. Although prices do range from store to store, it's usually a very affordable indulgence. Don't fight the urge—give in and enjoy. Although there are many *gelaterie* (ice-cream shops) to choose from, Vivoli wins hands-down as the local favorite.

### Carabe

Family-run gelateria is the life passion of proprietors Antonio and Loredana Lisciandro. Great choice of gelato flavors and Sicilian ice-cream specialties. A second location is at Piazza S. Jacopino 9/R

Daily 10:30 am-1 am.

Via Ricasoli 60-R (between the Duomo  
and Piazza San Marco)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-289-476

<http://www.gelatocarabe.com>

## Grom

This wildly popular place challenges Vivoli for the best gelato in Florence. You'll find it on Via del Campanile where it intersects with Via delle Oche near the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore.

April-October 10:30 am-midnight, November-March 10:30 am-11 pm. .

Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-216-158

<http://www.grom.it>

## Perche No

Tiny ice cream parlor serving artisanal gelato since 1939. They are famous for their *semifreddo*, which literally means "half-cold." It's a creamy mousse kind of gelato, which because of the high content of butterfat, won't freeze solid. Sinful, but simply delicious!

Daily 11 am-10:30 pm.

Via Tavolini 19/R (just off Via Calzaiuolo)  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-239-8969

<http://www.percheno.firenze.it>

## Vivoli

Small, like many shops in Florence, but it's worth enduring the cramped quarters for a scoop or two of Vivoli's high-quality gelato, family-made since the 1930s. Enjoy small portions for about 2 euros or a serving of multiple flavors for around 10 euros.

Tuesday-Saturday 7 am-midnight, Sunday 9 am-9 pm. \$. No credit cards.

Via Dell'isola Delle Stinche 7-R  
Florence, Italy

**Phone:** 055-292-334

<http://www.vivoli.it>

# Security

## Etiquette

Contrary to the relaxed image many have of Italy, the Italian business world emphasizes formality and procedure. Get assistance from a local contact, go through proper channels, and always present yourself and your firm as well-polished and accomplished.

**Appointments**—Having an intermediary is essential. Without someone to make the appropriate contacts, you'll find it hard to get much accomplished. Your go-between can help schedule meetings, which should be set up well in advance. It is very difficult—nearly impossible, in fact—to call on a businessperson unannounced. Confirm your meetings a day or two before they're set to take place, but expect last-minute changes, and if you're meeting outside of an office, don't expect punctuality.

**Personal Introductions**—Greet others with a handshake and a slight nod. Titles are important: Use any professional titles that are supplied on introduction or, better yet, ask for a list of the participants and their official titles in advance of the meeting. Continue to use the title and last name unless you are instructed otherwise.

**Negotiating**—The pace of negotiations is slow, and final decisions are not made by lower-level functionaries. The chain of command in Italian business is both vertical and horizontal, and decision-making can take a long time. Last-minute demands can be made by a person who enters the negotiations late in the game. In fact, this is sometimes used as a negotiating tool. Remain patient and calm at all times.

**Business Entertaining**—Business dinners are common but will typically involve only a few key players. If you are hosting the dinner, ask your Italian contact whom to invite. If you want to pay, tip the waiter ahead of time and ask that the bill be quietly given to you. If you do not make such arrangements in advance, you will have to ask for the check; it will not be brought to you automatically.

**Body Language**—Italians typically converse while standing close to one another. They tend to gesture when talking, and handshakes can extend longer than in other cultures. There is an entire system of hand signs that they use all the time, though none are likely to be made inadvertently by a foreigner. More often, visitors to Italy will start to imitate the gestures used by the locals without understanding the precise meanings of the movements—a practice we'd caution against.

**Gift Giving**—Small but high-quality gifts are appropriate in some situations: Ask your intermediary for advice. If you are invited to a home, take flowers or chocolates. Exercise caution in giving wine: Many Italians are experts; if you're not, you may want to select a different gift.

**Conversation**—Very little is off-limits in Italian conversation, but avoid being critical of Italian society and culture, even if your host is. Soccer is a passion and an easy topic, as are art, travel and Italian culture. The less positive sides of Italy, including Mussolini, World War II and the Mafia, are probably better avoided.

## Personal Safety

In Florence, as elsewhere, the best safety guideline is to use common sense. Florence is a lively place, and even on weekday evenings—especially during high season—the streets are relatively full until about midnight (much later on weekends).

Although there's no reason to avoid going out at night in the center of town, women traveling alone should take extra precautions. Avoid the Santa Maria Novella train station and the surrounding area at night: Transients congregate there. Do not cross any parks or large grassy squares, such as the Fortezza del Basso, in the dark.

Pickpocketing, unfortunately, is quite common. Pickpockets and purse snatchers often target tourists in crowded places, such as public buses, the train station or even churches. The Cascine street market is notorious. Italians often carry day packs backwards, with the pack in front of them where they can keep an eye on it. This way it is unlikely that a backpack can be slashed with a knife and the contents removed without the holder even being aware of the action behind them, a rather common way to separate tourists from their cameras or other valuables.

Watch out for packs of "gypsy" children who tend to come out of nowhere to create a small scene. While some distract you by harassing you or asking for money, another one of them—or a parent—may be making off with your wallet or purse. Keep a good lookout for people—even children—carrying a wrapped newspaper, a piece of cardboard or a raincoat on their forearm: That's a typical method of concealing the action. And keep your purse or bag tightly closed with single-minded determination.

Men should put wallets in either an inside zippered pocket or a front trouser pocket. (Gripping a wallet tells thieves where the wallet is located and makes things easy for them.)

Another thing to watch out for is purse snatchers on motorbikes: They may grab your purse as they ride by (more common on relatively isolated residential streets). A purse strap slung diagonally across your body, with the purse away from the road, will help you avoid being a target.

When stopping at traffic lights, watch for children cleaning your windshield. They are sometimes used to distract you while others clear the backseat and trunk of your car within seconds.

For the latest information, contact your country's travel-advisory agency. For the police, call toll-free 113; for the fire brigade, call 115.

## Health

Hygienic standards are generally similar to those in other industrialized nations. The water is safe to drink, although most Italians prefer the bottled variety. The water at public fountains on public squares is safe—and a boon in hot weather. Food sold on the streets is usually fine, but trust your instincts. Only buy gelato advertised as made in-house from shops with a high turnover so you are sure that the stock each day is fresh.

Medical facilities are generally very good in Florence. English-speaking medical services are offered at Via Roma 4. Monday-Friday 11 am-noon, 1-3 pm and 5-6 pm, and Saturday 11 am-noon and 1-3 pm. No appointment is necessary. The service also makes house calls 24 hours a day all year. Phone 055-475-411. <http://www.medicalservicefirenze.it>.

The hospital, Misericordia di Firenze on Vicolo degli Adimari 1, also offers medical attention for tourists Monday-Friday 2-6 pm. Phone 055-212-222.

Pharmacies (*farmacias*) are located throughout Florence and are indicated with a red or green neon cross that is lit when the store is open at night. (The door will sometimes be closed; ring the buzzer for service.) Regular hours are Monday-Saturday 9 am-1 pm and 3-7:30 pm, with a few minor variations. Pharmacies open 24 hours are listed on the city-run website [http://www.en.comune.fi.it/quick\\_links/pharmacies.htm](http://www.en.comune.fi.it/quick_links/pharmacies.htm).

Pharmacists in Italy can be of more help for minor ailments than pharmacists in the U.S. For major concerns, call the toll-free medical emergency number: 118.

Visitors to Italy are advised to write down the scientific or generic name of prescription medicines and keep them in a safe place during travel. If medicines are lost or a prescription runs out, making a trip to the pharmacy might be all you need to do to fill it.

During off hours and on Sunday and holidays, at least one pharmacy is open in every neighborhood. These are called *farmacia di turno* and are listed in the newspapers *La Nazione* and *La Repubblica* (in the Florence section). A window outside each pharmacy lists the closest *farmacia di turno*.

For the latest information, contact your country's health-advisory agency.

## Disabled Advisory

In general, Florence—and the rest of Italy—is not an easy place for the disabled because not all structures are equipped with ramps. Sensitivity to this issue is growing, however, and a few of the most important museums (Uffizi, Accademia, Bargello) are accessible, although the historic center is otherwise not easily navigated. The Santa Maria Novella train station is also fully accessible. All tourist offices offer up-to-date listings.

Some public restrooms are wheelchair-accessible, especially in the larger establishments. There's extensive information about the accessibility of public buildings at [http://en.comune.fi.it/health\\_safety/accessibility.html](http://en.comune.fi.it/health_safety/accessibility.html).

The city has created a website, "Florence Without Barriers," that offers information for the disabled about getting around the city, where to stay, where to eat and other useful services. <http://firenzeturismo.it/en/florence-accessible/florence-without-barriers.html>

## Facts

### Dos & Don'ts

Do wear comfortable shoes, as the pavements in Florence are a nightmare for high heels.

Don't ignore Florence's traffic rules—authorities have made sure that tourists won't escape the hefty fines.

Do visit the *aperitivi* bars of Florence in the early evening. They are the places to be seen at these hours, and most serve free nibbles of food with your drink, which is welcome when you're not used to Italy's later dining hours.

Don't—never, in fact—buy brand-name articles from street vendors, as they are bound to be fake. You may even face hefty fines when caught at the border or an Italian airport with a fake Rolex watch or Gucci bag.

Do enjoy the great view of Florence from the neighboring town of Fiesole or from the panoramic terrace of the Piazzale Michelangelo in the Oltramo area of Florence, where the views are gorgeous and sweeping, particularly at sunset.

Don't order a cappuccino after a meal, as you will get a blank stare from the waiter. Italians only drink cappuccinos in the morning; after meals, they drink espresso.

Do visit the historic center at 5 am to enjoy an hour of almost tourist-free Florence.

Do learn some very basic Italian words, which are very much appreciated in the shops and restaurants. Say *buongiorno* for "good day" when you are entering a shop, and *buona sera* in the evening (after 3 pm). Say *arrivederla* or *arrivederci* (less formal) for "goodbye." Two other useful phrases are *grazie* (thank you) and *per favore* (please).

## Geostats

**Passport/Visa Requirements:** Citizens of Canada and the U.S. need only a passport for stays of less than three months. Check travel document requirements with your carrier before departing.

**Population:** 382,961.

**Languages:** Italian, but English is usually spoken in places most frequented by tourists.

**Predominant Religions:** Christian (Roman Catholic).

**Time Zone:** 1 hour ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (+1 GMT). Daylight Saving Time is observed from the last Sunday in March to the last Sunday in October.

**Voltage Requirements:** 220 volts. Two- and three-prong round plugs are used.

**Telephone Codes:** 39, country code; 055, city code;

## Money

### Currency Exchange

Italy uses the euro as its currency. ATMs accept a range of foreign bank and credit cards for dispensing currency and are the most convenient way to get money. They usually give better rates than money-changing stands. Cash and traveler's checks may be exchanged at banks, commercial exchange offices and post offices, but be prepared for an ordeal—this is no longer a common way to get cash.

A detailed list of banks and commercial exchange services is available at the tourist information office at Via Cavour 1/R. It also has an updated list of post offices where you can exchange money.

The post office charges a fairly low commission (about 0.50 euros for cash and 1 euro for checks) if you're exchanging a relatively small amount of money. Banks often pay a higher exchange rate than the post office, but they may also charge a higher commission. Because this commission is a flat charge, it may be worthwhile to exchange relatively large sums at a bank.

Banks are open Monday-Friday 8:30 am-1:30 pm; most reopen for an hour in the afternoon, from about 2:30.

### Taxes

Italy imposes a value-added tax, known as IVA, on the price of most items, ranging from 4% for essential items (such as food) to 23% for nonessentials (such as leather goods). If you make a large purchase (more than about 155 euros) in a store and plan to take the items out of Italy, it may be possible to receive a refund of the IVA. Participation in this program is left up to the individual stores, so you may have to look around. Stores participating in the program usually have a special sticker or sign in the window, but it's still a good idea to verify participation before making your purchase. The refund can be claimed when you leave the last European Union country through which you are traveling.

Detailed instructions on how to get the VAT refund can be found in English on the Italian government customs and duty website: <http://www.agenziadogane.gov.it/wps/wcm/connect/internet/ee/vtatrefund>. A central phone number for the Customs Agency is 06-5024-6061.

### Tipping

Tipping is not obligatory. All restaurants include a cover charge per person (*pane e coperto*) that ranges from about 1 euro to about 4 euros per person. They sometimes add a 10%-12% service charge (*servizio*) as well. However, if you wish to reward especially good service, you might leave an extra 5%-10%.

In hotels, you might consider leaving the housekeepers 3 euros per day, per person, at the end of your stay. Porters and room-service personnel can be given 5 euros-10 euros. For taxi drivers, it's usually appropriate to tip about 1 euro unless it's an especially large fare.

### Weather

Summers are hot, with July being the hottest month. Temperatures can easily surpass 100 F/38 C, but 89-93 F/32-34 C is more the norm. Spring and fall tend to be mild, but don't be surprised to see the odd 80 F/27 C day even in April. A good time to visit is in late September or October—the sky is clear, the vineyards are in harvest, and the long, hot, muggy summer is over. Rain tends to be infrequent but heavy; it is most common in February and March and in the fall.

Although winter temperatures are not very low, dampness makes the cold penetrating. Winter temperatures can drop to just below freezing at night and warm up to 46-50 F/8-10 C during the day. Snow is rare.

## What to Wear

Italians dress very well and are extremely fashion-conscious. For visitors who want to be taken seriously, neat, casual attire is appropriate for everyday situations.

Italians tend to find tourists who sightsee in beach or sports attire rather amusing. You'll feel more comfortable (and get more attention) shopping in expensive clothing stores or patronizing more refined restaurants if you're dressed well, but if you do any walking in Florence, opt for comfortable shoes.

Show respect for religious places by dressing appropriately. If you're wearing short skirts, sleeveless tops or shorts, you will not be allowed to enter, particularly in churches and cathedrals, where they might ask you to put on a covering or deny you access. Business meetings require a suit and tie for men and equivalent apparel for women.

## Communication

### Telephone

There are few public phones left in Florence. Those that remain require a card issued by the phone company, Telecom. The cards (*carta telefonica*) are sold in various amounts. Before they can be used, the perforated corner must be torn off. A telephone card may be purchased at *tabacchi* (tobacco shops) and newspaper stands. A wide range of international phone cards now offer fixed rates, regardless of the time of day you call.

Remember that all Florence numbers begin with the prefix 055. Of course, to make an outside call from hotels, you may have to start with an additional 0 or 9, which should be included in the calling instructions.

Almost every Italian uses cell phones, called *telefonino*. GSM 900/1800 phones are used in Italy, and coverage is almost 100% in Florence. Roaming is very expensive, so it is best to sign up for a prepaid plan in Italy. If you have an unlocked GSM 900/1800 phone, you can purchase Italian SIM cards at a phone store or at many newsstands. Once you put in an Italian SIM card, you can buy minutes (*ricarica*) and only pay 0.20 euros for calls within Italy. Major providers are TIM (<http://www.tim.it>), Wind (<http://www.wind.it>) and Tre (<http://www.tre.it>).

The Tre store at Via Carlo del Prete 106 (phone 055-933-6171) is also the best place to find inexpensive SIM cards for your 3G-enabled tablet or other mobile devices, and is very helpful in the installation and activation of the SIM. The SIM is only available for use after midnight of the day it is purchased. It costs about 5 euros per month for 3 GB of data usage. <http://www.3storefirenze.it>.

### Internet Access

Internet cafes are extremely popular in Florence. There are a number of walk-in internet centers around the university area, especially around Via San Gallo. At peak times they can be crowded; those outside the city center tend to have more space. Most places charge about 2 euros for an hour to surf the web or check email. Internet cafes open and close rather quickly, and the Tourism Office across from the train station and the APT office keep a reasonably up-to-date list of about two dozen places.

If you have a laptop, many cafes and bars in Florence now have free Wi-Fi for customers. Because of security laws, however, you might need to provide a photo ID—often a passport is requested—to get a username and password.

You can also log onto one of the free public hot spots, called Firenze Wi-Fi. These areas include the Piazza dell Signoria, Piazza Santa Croce, Piazza San Spirito, Piazzale delle Cascine and Piazzale Michelangelo, among others. The first time you access it, you will be asked for your first and last name and your mobile phone number, which permits you one hour of free access every day. <http://www.i-florence.com/everyday-life/firenze-wifi-free-hotspot>.

## Mail & Package Services

You can save time and trouble by purchasing stamps at a tobacco shop (*tabacchi*), marked with a big white T against a black background. The tobacconist will weigh letters for you.

At post offices, a machine near the entrances dispenses tickets; don't forget to take a number, or you'll end up waiting forever. If you are mailing a letter or package, press the *spedizione* button (it will probably have a picture of an envelope next to it). The number on your ticket will have a *P* beside it.

If you're mailing something important, skip the post office and use a private delivery service. DHL and Mail Boxes Etc. have a handful of shops in the city.

### Central Post Office

The city's main post office. Monday-Friday 8:15 am-7 pm, Saturday 8:15 am-1:30 pm. On the last Saturday of the month, all post offices close at noon. Via Pellicceria 3 (near Piazza della Repubblica). Florence, Italy. Phone 055-273-6481. <http://www.poste.it>.

## Newspapers & Magazines

The *International New York Times*, *The Guardian* and *USA Today*, as well as such magazines as *Time* and *The Economist*, are all regularly available at newsstands at the main train station, the Duomo, Via Martelli, Piazza della Repubblica and Piazza della Signoria.

The Rome-based daily *La Repubblica* (<http://www.firenze.repubblica.it>) has a very handy section about Florence with up-to-the-minute information. The best local news and events are to be found in Florence's top daily, *La Nazione* (<http://lanazione.it/firenze>). Also, the monthly *Firenze Spettacolo* (<http://www.firenzespettacolo.it>) is a useful guide to goings-on in the city, listing everything from video art to opera.

*The Florentine* is an English-language newspaper written by students and expats living in Florence. It's a good source of local information. You can find it in many bars, bookstores and hotels, or you can check the website. <http://www.theflorentine.net>.

## Transportation

Most visitors arrive in Florence by either plane or train, or sometimes a combination of both (there's a convenient rail link with the nearby Pisa airport).

Getting around Florence became a lot easier when the city center closed to traffic (except to residents). Florence is a driver's nightmare, with its tiny, narrow streets perennially clogged with parked cars, bicycles, mopeds, dumpsters and recycling containers.

Because the areas of most interest to visitors are all within a pleasant walk from one another, the important sights are better reached on foot. (You'll notice that mopeds dominate the city-center streets, so use caution when crossing.) Those few attractions not easily reached on foot are on main public bus routes. Taxis are an option—an expensive option.

## Air

Amerigo Vespucci Airport (FLR) lies on the northern outskirts of the city. Locally, the airport is referred to as "Peretola," the name of the neighborhood where it's located. It has been modernized, with a good self-service restaurant added. Even though it's larger, the airport is still small enough to navigate easily. Phone 055-30615. <http://www.aeroporto.firenze.it>.

### Connecting Transportation

#### *Best way:*

The ATAF and SITA bus services for Peretola are now as convenient as a taxi for getting into town. The buses pick up passengers outside the Arrivals terminal at the stop marked "Vola in Bus." Daily 6 am-11:20 pm. Service into town is express and takes 20-30 minutes. From town, the most convenient spot to catch the bus to the airport is just outside the central train station. (If you are getting off a train, take the station's left-side exit to find the stop; upon exiting, turn left again and look for the nearby stop marked "Vola in Bus.") Buses depart the train station every half-hour 5:30 am-11 pm. Their marquees display *Aeroporto* in large letters. A one-way ticket costs 6 euros, a return ticket costs 10 euros and you can buy them onboard. <http://www.ataf.net> or <http://www.sitabus.it>.

Although not the cheapest way to get into town, a taxi is convenient. Expect a ride to the center of Florence to cost around 20 euros during the day and 24 euros 10 pm-6 am. The same ride will cost you 22 euros on Sunday. There's an extra 1 euro charge for each piece of luggage and a supplemental airport charge. Additional charges may be incurred.

#### *Other options:*

Some of the larger hotels have courtesy vans or limos, but be sure the hotel knows exactly when you're arriving at the airport.

Rental car agencies have offices at the airport.

Galileo Galilei Airport (PSA) in Pisa (<http://www.pisa-airport.com>) is so well-linked to the central train station in Florence that it practically serves as a second airport. When you exit the baggage claim, turn left and walk to the end of the terminal, where you'll find train information and—just outside—the airport's train station.

Tickets to "Firenze, Santa Maria Novella" may be purchased inside the airport terminal at the information desk. Remember to validate your ticket at the appropriate machine.

A bus service, Terravision, also connects Pisa's airport to the Florence train station. The trip generally takes about an hour, but allow 90 minutes. (Interestingly, the price of this connection is now less than the bus connection from the Florence airport.) The price is 4.99 euros one way, 9.98 euros round-trip. For children ages 4-12, cost is 4 euros one way and 8 euros round-trip, free for children younger than 4. You can book directly online at <http://www.terravision.eu>.

## Bus

The CAP system (<http://www.capautolinee.it>) offers dependable service to Prato and many other small towns in Tuscany. Lazzi (<http://www.lazzi.it>) has extremely reliable service that reaches even farther than the CAP system. These buses have service to Lucca, Pistoia and more. SITA buses (<http://www.sitabus.it>) run to San Gimignano and Siena. All three bus lines' stations are very close to the Santa Maria Novella train station.

## Car

Renting a car to drive in Florence or any other urban area of Italy is very much discouraged. However, if traveling out of the city, they can be an excellent means of transport, as Italian motorways as a rule are in excellent condition.

To rent a car, you must be at least 18 years old (although the age may vary by vehicle type and agency, and drivers younger than 25 may incur a surcharge) and have held your license for one year. You'll need both your domestic driver's license and an international one, as well. Seat belts are mandatory, and children younger than 12 must wear an age-appropriate restraint. Make sure your car also carries the mandatory reflective vest and a break-down kit. (You can be fined if they do not, and very likely will not be able to recoup the cost from the agency.) Full prepayment of the estimated rental charges is required at the time of reservation.

The recent profusion of automatic ticketing machines called "Autovelox" and the need to find new revenue sources to bolster Italy's faltering economy have all but eliminated the verve that Italians once brought to the simple act of driving on the highways. Today, speed limits (80 mph/130 kph) on clear stretches of the Autostrada—Italy's toll road system—are almost reverently respected. With traffic not moving as it once did, and with construction projects under way, the Autostrada near Florence is often found to be at a standstill.

You must be particularly alert when you drive on Italian roads. As noted above, having a car in the center of Florence is completely unnecessary and inconvenient, so we recommend renting a car only for those days when you'll be exploring areas outside the city.

If you do choose to drive, bear in mind that there is virtually no place to park in the center of Florence. Unless you're staying on the outskirts or your hotel has its own parking area, you'll find yourself hunting endlessly for the ever-elusive parking spot. Practically all spots in the city center need a permit, and the area of the Piazza del Duomo is a pedestrian-only zone—no cars allowed. Illegal parking will result in your car being towed, which is inconvenient and costly. Major public parking lots in the city are located under the Santa Maria Novella station and all along the inner ring road.

Using a hand-held cell phone while driving is illegal in Italy and subject to a hefty fine.

## Public Transportation

### ATAF city buses

Orange city buses, run by ATAF, serve the entire city and many outlying areas. You need a ticket in hand before you board the bus, and tickets can be purchased at bars, tobacconists, newspaper stands and kiosks. At the main train station in Florence, you can buy tickets at the kiosk on the right side of the main taxi stand. Tobacconists display a sign with a large white T against a black or blue background. Other establishments that sell bus tickets display the orange ATAF logo. When there's no other option—for example, in the evening when no ticket sellers are open—you can buy one from the bus driver, but it will cost slightly more (2 euros for a single ticket).

All bus tickets in Italy must be validated at the start of a trip, as must train tickets. There's a machine to validate the tickets, usually at either the front or middle entrance of the bus. Having an unstamped ticket is the same as not having one at all and is liable to land you with a fine. Stamp bus tickets in machines at the back or front of the bus. Tickets are valid for 90 minutes, regardless of how many different lines you take or where you go, and are valid on all buses, trams and trains. Depending on the route, buses run every four minutes to every half-hour. Most buses finish service by midnight. The basic ticket for the local ATAF bus service costs 1.20 euros. Tickets purchased in sets of four cost 4.70 euros, but a better deal is a pack of 10 for 10 euros. A full-day ticket costs 5 euros and is valid until midnight the day it is activated.

. Florence, Italy. Phone 055-56501. Toll-free 800-424-500. <http://www.ataf.net>.

### Taxi

Taxis operate 24 hours a day and are metered. There are surcharges at night, on Sunday and holidays, for trips originating at the airport, for baggage, and when you order a cab by phone. Fares are outrageous: Even a rather short ride will rarely cost less than 10 euros, thanks to a high minimum fare. However, because the number of public buses is greatly reduced after 9 pm, taxis are indispensable for going long distances late at night.

You can get a taxi either by going to a taxi stand or by calling; you won't have much luck hailing one on the street. Taxi stands are located in the following city-center piazzas: San Marco, Repubblica, San Giovanni, Santa Maria Novella and Santa Croce. There are also stands in front of the Hotel Baglioni and at the corner of Via Oriuolo and the Duomo. Stands are marked with blue-and-white signs.

When you call for a cab, the switchboard operator will tell you the number of the cab that is coming to pick you up. Don't get in unless the number corresponds—wait for your proper taxi to arrive. Phone 055-4242, 055-4390 or 055-4499.

## Train

Train service in Italy is run by the state-owned Ferrovie dello Stato. There are two main stations in Florence: Santa Maria Novella and Campo di Marte. The central station is Santa Maria Novella (abbreviated SMN on most signs), and Campo di Marte lies to the east of the Viali and predominantly serves trains that are merely passing through the city without stopping. Always check which station your train stops at—a surprising number of night trains, for example, stop only at Campo di Marte.

The information desk at Santa Maria Novella, located in front of tracks 10 and 11, has English-speaking personnel. All train times can be found online at <http://www.trenitalia.com>. The call center is open 24 hours a day; phone 89-2021, or from abroad +39-06-6847-5475.

Before you hop on your train, make sure you validate the train ticket in the yellow stamping machines located at the end of almost every track. Fines for not doing so are hefty, and you'll be required to pay on the spot.

## For More Information

### Additional Reading

*Living Abroad in Italy* by John Moretti (Avalon). A guide for day-to-day living in Italy.

*Brunelleschi's Dome: How a Renaissance Genius Reinvented Architecture* by Ross King (Penguin). The history and people behind the great architectural feat.

*Made in Italy: A Shopper's Guide to Italy's Best Artisanal Traditions* by Lara Morelli. Large section on local artisans in Florence and surrounding area.

## Tourist Offices

### APT Information Office

The tourist information offices are run by the Azienda di Promozione Turistica, the tourist authority for the Province of Florence. Besides the main office at Via Cavour, there are two additional offices—one near the train station, at Piazza Stazione 4, Florence, open Monday-Saturday 9 am-7 pm, Sunday 9 am-2 pm (phone 055-212-245), and the other at Piazza San Giovanni, open Monday-Saturday 9 am-7 pm, Sunday 9 am-2 pm (phone 055-288-496). There is also a small tourist office at the airport near the Arrival hall, open daily 8:30 am-6:30 pm. The main office is open Monday-Saturday 8:30 am-6:30 pm. Via Cavour 1/R (next door to the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi). Florence, Italy. Phone 055-290-832 or 055-290-833. <http://www.firenzeturismo.it>.

### Florence City Tourist Information Offices

The city council operates two tourist information offices. The one across the street from the front of the train station is convenient. Monday-Saturday 9 am-7 pm, Sunday 9 am-2 pm. Piazza Stazione 4 (near Santa Maria Novella station). Florence, Italy. Phone 55-212-245. <http://en.comune.fi.it>.

## Events

### Calendar

Florence is a visual feast with its distinctive architecture and world-famous sculptures and paintings. In addition to their magnificent permanent collections, the Uffizi Gallery, the Bargello Museum and other sites often add traveling exhibitions to their treasure houses.

Florence also provides an extensive array of musical and dance performances—only a few of which are represented in these listings.

For detailed information about upcoming events in the Florence area, contact Agenzia per il Turismo, which has the most thorough listings. Phone 055-290-832. <http://www.firenzeturismo.it>.

If you dial any of the Florence numbers listed in this calendar from outside Italy, you must first dial your country's international access code, then Italy's country code, 39, and Florence's city code, 055. Even if you're calling from within Florence, you must dial the city code, 055, before the rest of the (four- to eight-digit) phone number. We've included the city codes in the phone numbers listed in this calendar.

Information in this calendar is subject to change and should be confirmed.

## January 2017

**1 Jan—New Year's Day** Public holiday.

**6 Jan—Epiphany** Public holiday.

## April 2017

**9 Apr—Palm Sunday** On Palm Sunday, a parade and re-enactment of Christ's entrance into Jerusalem is staged in Piazza Signoria. For information, call 055-646-051. For tickets, call 055-210-804.

**14 Apr—Good Friday** On Good Friday, a re-enactment of Christ's life and Passion is performed in Grassina, a municipality just outside Florence. For information, call 055-646-051. <http://www.rievstoricagrassina.it>.

**16 Apr—Scoppio del Carro** One of Florence's biggest festivals is the Scoppio del Carro, literally "Explosion of the Cart," an event that dates back to medieval times. The Scoppio del Carro takes place following mass on Easter Sunday in front of the Duomo.

**16 Apr—Easter Sunday** Public holiday.

**17 Apr—Easter Monday** Public holiday.

**25 Apr—Liberation Day** Public holiday.

**Late April—Maggio Musicale Fiorentino** The oldest Italian music festival and one of the most important in Europe attracts music lovers from around the world to its often-groundbreaking operas, concerts and ballets. Teatro Comunale, Corso Italia 16. <http://www.maggiofiorentino.it>. Continues through late July

## May 2017

**Mid May—International Iris Competition** This juried flower show has featured varieties of iris from around the world since 1954. More than 150 types are in bloom at Il Giardino dell'Iris (the Iris Garden), Pizzale Michelangelo. For information, call 055-483-112. <http://www.irisfirenze.it>.

**1 May—Labor Day** Public holiday.

**5-31 May—Fabbrica Europa** An annual international festival of contemporary music, dance, theater and visual arts from a variety of cultural traditions. In the former Leopolda Railway Station. For information, call 055-263-8480. <http://fabbricaeuropa.net>. Continues through 18 Jun

**Late May—Fiorita** The death of Fra Girolamo Savonarola—zealous religious reformer of the 15th century—is commemorated with a ceremony and procession. Palagio di Parte Guelfa, Parte Guelfa 1. For information, call 055-261-6029.

**Throughout May—Maggio Musicale Fiorentino** The oldest Italian music festival and one of the most important in Europe attracts music lovers from around the world to its often-groundbreaking operas, concerts and ballets. Teatro Comunale, Corso Italia 16. <http://www.maggiofiorentino.it>. Continues through late July

## June 2017

**Early-Late June—Flower Display** Midsummer in Florence sees a carpet of flowers covering the main square, the Piazza della Signoria. Perfectly arranged and meticulously tended, they provide a riot of color and are a great source of civic pride.

**1-18 Jun—Fabbrica Europa** An annual international festival of contemporary music, dance, theater and visual arts from a variety of cultural traditions. In the former Leopolda Railway Station. For information, call 055-263-8480. <http://fabbricaeuropa.net>. Concludes 18 Jun

**24 Jun—Feast of San Giovanni** Public holiday honoring the patron saint of Florence, St. John. A traditional *gioco del calcio* (soccer match) takes place. At 9 am, a costumed procession of Florentine guild officials leaves from the Society of St. John headquarters at Via del Corso 1, joined by the competing teams from each of the four quarters of the city. Members of noble Florentine families follow on horseback. Games are played at the Piazza Santa Croce. A fireworks display takes place in the evening, lighting up the Piazzale Michelangelo.

**Throughout June—Maggio Musicale Fiorentino** The oldest Italian music festival and one of the most important in Europe attracts music lovers from around the world to its often-groundbreaking operas, concerts and ballets. Teatro Comunale, Corso Italia 16. <http://www.maggiofiorentino.it>. Continues through late July

## July 2017

**2 Jul—Il Palio** Traditional, famed bareback horse races around the Piazza del Campo, Siena's main square. The races are preceded by three days of trial runs, parades and feasting, and are followed by a day of feasting and accolades for the winning horse and rider. Siena is 90 minutes from Florence on the SITA bus. For information, call 0577-280-551. <http://www.teresiena.it>.

**Throughout July—Maggio Musicale Fiorentino** The oldest Italian music festival and one of the most important in Europe attracts music lovers from around the world to its often-groundbreaking operas, concerts and ballets. Teatro Comunale, Corso Italia 16. <http://www.maggiofiorentino.it>. Concludes late July

## August 2017

**15 Aug—Feast of the Assumption** Public holiday.

**16 Aug—Il Palio** Traditional, famed bareback horse races around the Piazza del Campo, Siena's main square. The races are preceded by three days of trial runs, parades and feasting, and are followed by a day of feasting and accolades for the winning horse and rider. Siena is 90 minutes from Florence on the SITA bus. For information, call 0577-280-551. <http://www.teresiena.it>.

## September 2017

**7 Sep—Festa della Rificolona** Cultural events at the Festival of Lanterns take place in Piazza Annunziata, along the Arno River and in all four quarters of the city. For information, call 055-23320.

**10 Sep—La Giostra della Stella** Four neighborhoods in the nearby town of Bagno a Ripoli compete in a tournament that incorporates everything from a three-legged race to feats of skill on galloping horses. Citizens parade in Renaissance costumes. Fireworks conclude the festivities. Bagno a Ripoli is 15 minutes from Florence by car. <http://www.giostradellastella.it>.

**23-30 Sep—Mostra Mercato Internazionale dell'Antiquariato** This antiques show is the oldest in Italy and one of the most important in the world. More than 80 international exhibitors of fine antiques and paintings occupy more than 16,000 sq ft/1,500 sq m of exhibit space. Held once every two years. Palazzo Corsini, Lungarno Corsini. <http://www.biennaleantiquariato.it>. Continues through 1 Oct

## October 2017

**1 Oct—Mostra Mercato Internazionale dell'Antiquariato** This antiques show is the oldest in Italy and one of the most important in the world. More than 80 international exhibitors of fine antiques and paintings occupy more than 16,000 sq ft/1,500 sq m of exhibit space. Held once every two years. Palazzo Corsini, Lungarno Corsini. <http://www.biennaleantiquariato.it>. Final day

**6-15 Oct—International Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary Art** This international juried art show displays contemporary art by 800 artists from nearly 75 countries. Also concerts, performances, lectures and special events. Fortezza da Basso, Firenze Expo, Piazza Adua 1. For information, call 055-324-9173. <http://www.florencebiennale.org>.

## November 2017

**1 Nov—All Saints' Day** Public holiday.

## December 2017

**8 Dec—Feast of the Immaculate Conception** Public holiday.

**25 Dec—Christmas** Public holiday.

**26 Dec—St. Stephen's Day** Public holiday.