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History and culture

Art & Culture were in great ferment and the people's desire to educate themselves gave rise to the first work in the vernacular language, in the poetic style of "Dolce stil novo", which then brought about the works of Dante, Petrarca, Boccaccio and finally, a century later, the "Accademia della Crusca". It was Boccaccio who documented the plague of Florence, a tragedy that started off the people's dissatisfaction, which culminated in the "tumulto dei Ciompi" riots in 1378.

After a short period in which the people ruled the city, the Medici dynasty then took over, first with Cosimo and then with Lorenzo il Magnifico, who brought the Humanist Age to Florence, together with the wonderful architecture by Brunelleschi. After Lorenzo il Magnifico's death (1492), and in later centuries, the city oscillated between Republican agitation and Medici revenge, while geniuses such as Michelangelo and Leonardo Da Vinci became famous names in art and literature.

In 1865, Florence was chosen to be the capital of the Kingdom of Italy, and remained capital until 1871. In later centuries, such as Tiziano, Cimabue, Giotto, Boccaccio, and finally, a tragedy that started off the people's dissatisfaction, which culminated in the "tumulto dei Ciompi" riots in 1378.

The dispute between the Guelfs, who were faithful to the Pope, and the Ghibellines, loyal to the Emperor Frederick II, that resulted in the Guelfs being exiled from the city, was extremely interesting. When the Emperor died, however, the Guelfs took the upper hand once more and Florence enjoyed a period of prosperity. Great importance was given to the Corporazione delle Arti and the architectural beauties, which make Florence such a unique city, began to be built.

Churches and Museums

The most magnificent and interesting churches from an artistic and architectural point of view:

Duomo - Santa Maria del Fiore and Baptistry
Work on the Gothic cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore began in 1296 and was completed by Brunelleschi in 1436 with the famous Dome, which was painted inside with frescoes by Vasari and Zuccari. The square Bell tower designed by Giotto in 1334 stands on the right-hand side of the Cathedral and is covered in white, green and red marble. The Baptistry of San Giovanni, one of the oldest monuments in Florence (1128), is located opposite the Cathedral and is built in Florentine Romanesque style.

Orsanmichele
This church was built with the intention of becoming the people’s grain market, but was immediately used as a place of worship. 14 niches can be seen in the church’s outer walls containing the same number of statues of saints who are patrons of the arts and work "Corporations":

Basilica di Santa Croce
This church in the Gothic-Florentine style was built in the second half of the 12th century. Santa Croce contains several masterpieces: the frescoes by Giotto, the Crucifix by Cimabue and the Cappella dei Pazzi, a chapel built by Brunelleschi. The Basilica is famous throughout the world because some famous people are buried inside it, such as Alferi, whose tomb was sculpted by Canova.

Basilica di San Lorenzo
The interior of this church was completed by Brunelleschi and later, by Michelangelo. The Basilica di San Lorenzo’s façade is still not finished. There are some works of art inside: the two pulpits built by Donatello when he was already 74 years old, The Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana and the Tombe Medicee, works by Michelangelo, the Cappella dei Principi chapel with its magnificent decorations in marble and semi-precious stones.

Santa Maria Novella
Built in the 13th century according to the wishes of the Dominican monks, the Church’s façade is built in the Gothic-Romanesque style, with white and green marble. Important works of art inside are the frescoes by Masaccio portraying the Holy Trinity, the Crucifix by Brunelleschi and the one by Giotto.

All the museums and galleries to be seen:

Galleria degli Uffizi
The Uffizi Gallery is one of the largest museums in the world, It was built in the mid-sixteenth century, following a project by the architect Giorgio Vasari and still houses some of the most famous works of art by Italian and foreign painters from the 13th to 19th centuries, such as Titian, Cimabue, Giotto, Masaccio, Tintoretto, Leonardo, Botticelli,
Michelangelo, Piero della Francesca, Raffaello, Caravaggio, Rubens, Rembrandt, Dürer and Goya.

**Galleria dell’Accademia**
This Gallery was founded in 1784 by the Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo, who decreed that all the schools of painting should be joined together in a single Academy. One of the most popular museums in Florence, the Gallery houses many sculptures by Michelangelo, including the famous David.

**Bargello**
The National Museum, housed in a building that was the city prison dating back to 1200. It contains some of the best sculptures from the Tuscan Renaissance era. Some of the works of art in the Bargella are: the David by Donatello, Mercury by Gianbologna, and the bust of Brutus by Michelangelo.

**Archeological Museum**
The collection of artifacts on show in the Museum belonged to the Medici family, especially to Cosimo il Vecchio, and comprises objects from the Etruscan period: terracotta ornaments and sculptures in marble and bronze, including the Chimera di Arezzo and l’Arringatore. The Egyptian section, that was created thanks to the collection from another important family, the Lorena, is not to be missed.

**History of Science Museum**
This is an important collection of scientific instruments that are proof of the interest that 13th century Florence had in science. The collection includes sun dials and night-clocks, compasses, microscopes and a series of original instruments made by Galileo Galilei.

**Casa Buonarroti**
This palace was renovated in 1612 by Michelangelo Buonarroti “il giovane”, who decorated all the interior area of the building on his own, as a tribute to his ancestor. It is possible to see some early masterpieces by Michelangelo such as the Madonna della Scala and the Battaglia dei Centauri.

**Giardino di Boboli**
The Boboli Gardens spread out alongside Palazzo Pitti. They were both created on the wishes of the Medici family in 1500. If we take a walk through these wonderful Renaissance gardens, we can see some charming monuments such as the amphitheater, the Grotta del Buontalenti, and the small island with the statues of the dancing country-folk.

**The San Lorenzo Market**
The Central San Lorenzo Market is housed inside a huge iron and glass building that was built in 1874. Even though it is now a tourist attraction, the Market has preserved a part of its charm. On the ground floor there are several delicatessens, selling Florentine and Tuscan delicacies, where it is possible to stop for a bite to eat. On the first floor there are flower stalls and fruit and vegetable stalls where all the local seasonal produce is displayed.

**Spedale degli Innocenti**
This building was opened in 1445, and was the first orphanage in Europe. A part of the building is still used for this purpose today. The portico, built by Brunelleschi, is decorated with glazed terracotta spheres that represent new-born children. It is still possible to see the “wheel” in the portico, a turning stone cylinder where mothers placed their unwanted children, who were then turned round to the inside of the building.

**Palazzo Pitti**
This palace was built for the banker Luca Pitti halfway through the fifteenth century. After he went bankrupt, the building became the Medici family residence. The family improved the building, starting with the large courtyard designed by Ammaniti. The Medici collected their Baroque and Renaissance art collections here, which can now be viewed in the Palatina Gallery. The Palace contains other important museums too: the gallery of Modern Art, the Silver Museum and the Costume Gallery.
The region that is home to Florence has one of the most versatile and varied-form cooking traditions in Italy, that we have already mentioned in our tourists’ guide to Tuscany. We are going to try and provide a more specific view, limiting ourselves to the city of Florence and the area immediately around it.

Florentine cooking is linked to a tradition of simple dishes prepared with genuine, tasty but plain ingredients, which has recently been reconsidered by the world of more sophisticated cuisine. Cereals, bread, vegetable and oil (which must be extra-virgin) are the basis of many recipes that just have to be tried in one of the many restaurants in Florence.

Simple food, such as cannellini beans and other vaguely repulsive ingredients such as tripe and livers are transformed into pleasant, tasty dishes, served on both stalls and in local inns and also in luxury restaurants. We can therefore find: fagioli all’uccelletto (beans), boiled and then fried in oil and tomato sauce; trippa alla fiorentina, (tripe) covered in tomato and grated parmesan cheese; lamprodotto, the darkest part of tripe, used for soups and risottos, but also liked by many locals as a filling for a sandwich; crostini toscani with liver paté. And the unforgettable “fiorentina” a cut of meat from the Chianina cow, famous worldwide, to be tried in any restaurant in Florence.

The area surrounding Florence is famous for being the birthplace of Chianti, the most famous Tuscan wine. Four different types of Chianti are produced from the vines on the flourishing Florentine hills. Chianti “Classico” is produced between Florence and Siena, while the other names come from the geographic areas that the province of Florence is divided into: there is Chianti “Colli Fiorentini”, Chianti “Rufina” and Chianti “Montespertoli”.

Other wines from the area are Pomino, which has been appreciated since the beginning of the 1700s, and which owes its name to one of the smallest DOC vineyards in the world, and Vin Santo, which was already known in the fourteenth century, and which is closely linked to Florentine hospitality. The people offered it to guests accompanied by the traditional cantuccini biscuits.

Florence has an ancient tradition of craftwork: once upon a time, each area of the city was characterized by a certain type of work, each controlled by the powerful Corporazione delle Arti: sculptors’ laboratories, leather goods makers, blacksmiths and goldsmiths. The corporations were based on strict rules and only the legitimate children of a member could join the profession. In this way, art and techniques have been handed down through the generations to the present day. Some old stores are still more or less in tact, such as the Antica Officina di Santa Maria Novella, one of the oldest pharmacies in the world, where it is possible to buy essences and perfumes made to formulas that were created in the sixteenth century for Caterina de’ Medici, and liqueurs that are still made today following the antique formula used by the Dominican monks.

When walking along the Ponte vecchio you can see the famous Florentine goldsmiths’ shops, while the handmade shoe makers are spread around the city. This Florentine tradition was made famous by Salvatore Ferragamo, shoemaker to the stars, whose creations can be admired in the museum carrying his name.

Whoever is planning a trip to Florence cannot forget its thriving food and wine culture. If you want to buy local products, there is no end of choice: tasty cheeses and sought-after salami attract food-lovers from the delicatessen shop windows; it is possible to taste and buy refined wines and fine extra-virgin oils in the many wine-cellars around the city. Don’t miss out on a trip to San Lorenzo Market, located inside the splendid liberty-style building.
Hotels and lodgings

There is no end of choice of accommodation in Florence. Depending on the budget you have available, you can choose from several options. Let’s look at some of them together.

If you are looking for a solution that mixes excellent service with the comfort of being just a stone’s throw from the old city center, you can choose one of the many hotels in Florence, shown in our guide to Florence, for all budgets and needs. For anyone planning to stay longer, we recommend renting an apartment in Florence or nearby. Many agencies provide a wide range of possibilities, so that you can choose the one most suitable to your needs.

Are you traveling on a tight budget? Don’t worry, there aren’t just five-star hotels in the city! There are many Bed & Breakfast where you can stay without spending too much, and without having to go without service or comfort. Have you got an even smaller budget? You can stay in a hostel or in a campsite, which don’t cost too much. There are several in Florence both inside the city and just outside. In winter you can rent a caravan, or you can spend even less by bringing your tent with you during the warmer seasons.

If instead you want to go on trips outside the city and want to set up base in the Chianti hills, why not choose one of the rural country-house near Florence. You can find castles, old farmhouses, farms and country houses that are all perfectly equipped to welcome guests and ready to seduce them with the food and wine specialties of the area.

Events

Maggio Fiorentino
From April to June
Maggio Musicale Fiorentino is an international festival entirely dedicated to music that is held in the Municipal Theater in Florence. It was organized for the first time in 1937 and is one of the oldest festivals in Europe.

Fochi di San Giovanni
24 June
For centuries, Florence has celebrated the birth of St John the Baptist, the city’s patron saint, with celebrations and amazing fireworks displays.

Pitti Immagine
For fifty years, Pitti Immagine has been an international window for Italian fashion, a reference point for the development of the Made in Italy industry in the world, thanks to the creation of the several annual events that take place.

Biennale Internazionale d’Arte Contemporanea di Florence
December
The Florence Biennale for contemporary art is a recent event on the Florence scene, but it has already become enormously successful: in the 2002 edition, there were 600 artists, including painters, sculptors, digital artists and video art creators from all over the world.

Mostra Internazionale dell’artigianato
April-May
This international crafts show, organized each year, is set in the beautiful surroundings of Fortezza da Basso. The event wishes to increase the value of the craftwork heritage from an economic and cultural point of view.

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La Dolce Vita

For the second half of the evening, the Florentines all head to some of the clubs in the city. Which one depends on what day of the week it is. On Saturdays, getting into Tenax is what everyone wants to do. This is a club with live music and international names, but it is also a wine bar with chill-out music, for relaxing after a night on the town. A famous club in Florence is Yab, which has been known since 1966 as the “8 Club”. It is very busy on a Monday evening, the day dedicated to hip-hop music. Non conventional people will favor Central Park, which has recently become a reference point for the fashion world: fashion shows organized by famous Made in Italy designers are often held here, in fact.

Let's end with a club that is considered by all to be a forerunner: Jaragua, the first Latin American only club that opened in Italy, a trend that then spread like wild fire.

A special day

If you are busy and in a hurry, but you don’t want to miss out on the pleasures of life, travelplan.it has dedicated a Florence itinerary to you, that lasts from morning until evening.

Before beginning, here is a simple piece of advice: do you only have one day to visit Florence? Get it into your head that you will never manage to see everything, so go for quality rather than quantity and follow our tourists’ guide to Florence to try and use your time as well as possible.

This itinerary is concentrated in the central-east area of Florence.

Morning
To really throw yourself into the educated and artistic atmosphere of Florence, there is nothing better than having breakfast at the Historical Literary Coffee Shop “Giubbe Rosse” in Piazza Repubblica n° 13. It was opened at the end of the 19th century by two German brothers and in the first decade of the twentieth century it became the meeting place for artist and literary experts of the time. Its tables have seen lively discussions between Marinetti and Papini, Prezzolini and Campana, Gadda and Boccioni, Montale and Quasimodo, and the projects for some historical futuristic magazines such as “La Voce” were planned here. The Coffee shop still organizes some cultural events for the intellectuals of Florence today.

Go on foot from Piazza Repubblica to the nearby Piazza del Duomo that is in the medieval area of Florence, where Dante Alighieri was born. Don’t miss out on a visit to the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, or the Duomo of Florence, where it is possible to see the Dome by Brunelleschi, the Bell tower by Giotto and the Baptistry. Near the Duomo, there is Orsanmichele, the Gothic church whose walls are covered with the sculptures that represent the activities of the citizens’ “corporations”. If you still have enough time, you can take a taxi or bus and visit the Bargello, the home of the National Museum that houses a collection of Renaissance sculptures including the ones by Cellini.

Choose one of the restaurants in Florence, the one nearest to your next stop on this itinerary and get ready to taste some Tuscan delicacies, but try not to eat too much, as your afternoon will be spent visiting the city. We recommend some typical tasty dishes that are not so hard to digest: panzanella, zuppa di farro, fagioli all’uccelletto and ricotta alla toscana, served with olive oil. Pepper and honey.

Afternoon
Make your way to the amazing Piazza della Signoria, the center of Florentine political life since the 14th century. Some of the open-air works on display are Fountain of Neptune, the copy of Michelangelo’s David, the Ratto delle Sabine and Perseus by Cellini.

A trip to Florence has to include a visit, even if just a quick one to the Galleria degli Uffizi where we advise you to stop and see a few important paintings: il Duca e la Duchessa di
Shopping in Florence

Urbino by Piero della Francesca, la Venere di Urbino by Tiziano, la Madonna d'Ognissanti by Giotto and the Nascita di Venere and la Primavera by Botticelli. There is still time for a romantic walk on the Ponte Vecchio.

Evening
Choose one of the restaurants in Florence shown in our guide and allow yourself to try all those things that you had to pass up on at lunchtime: why not start off with an antipasto of mixed salami and crostini and then go on to a first course such as ribollita or le pappardelle al sugo di lepre. As a second course, don’t miss out on the famous Fiorentina steak while for dessert, why not go for a slice of panforte and some ricciarelli.

All washed down with a Chianti DOC, or, for the more sophisticated, a Brunello di Montalcino.

Staying in accommodation in Florence for at least one night is necessary so relax and enjoy your romantic evening in Florence. You will have plenty of time to rest after this hectic day in one of the many hotels in Florence and you can set off on your journey again tomorrow.

Cascine market in viale Lincoln. Take a quick look at the Officina Profumo Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella, the old pharmacy where you can be essences and beauty products and at Bojola in via dei Rondinelli n° 25r, an old crafts shop opened in 1892 you can buy leather goods such as bags, suitcases and wallets.

Afternoon
Your afternoon will be dedicated to a trip outside the city, for shopping, Around Florence there are many famous-label outlets. The most important is The Mall by Leccio Reggello (Via Artina n° 63, tel. 055 8657775), that can easily be reached by car, train or by Shuttle Bus from Florence (for bookings tel. +39 055 8657775). There is a wide choice here of clothes and accessories from past seasons by Armani, Gucci, Sergio Rossi, Bottega Veneta, Prada, Ferragamo, Roberto Cavalli and many other labels, at reduced prices.

Evening
At this point, all you have to do is show off your purchases, throwing yourself into the Florentine night life. Choose a night club that is to your taste and enjoy yourself all night long. When you are exhausted from your shopping and dancing, drag yourself back to one of the hotels in Florence.

For fashion addicts and fashion victims who are already familiar with the city and who are planning another stay in Florence, here is a made-to-measure Itinerary...

Home to the historical names of Made in Italy fashion such as Gucci, Emilio Pucci and Salvatore Ferragamo, Florence is an excellent opportunity to satisfy a few whims. So, go on, put your hand in your pocket and get ready to take some vintage souvenirs home to furnish your apartment with, or some food delicacies to please your taste buds and those of your friends and some accessories and famous-label clothes to show off and wear on special evenings.

Morning
The morning is the best time to wander round the markets and flea markets looking for those unique items and best bargains.

In Florence there are many markets to look round: the one in San Lorenzo is famous for its food delicatessens, then there is the Mercato delle Pulci, that is held every day in Piazza dei Ciompi with its antique stalls and the
Three places less than 40 km from Florence

The area around Florence is an excellent place to relax, enjoy yourself, get to know things and make your taste buds happy. All you need is a bit of time and travelplan.it can help you here, suggesting some trips outside the city near to Florence. If you have time to spare, book a hotel in Florence or nearby and use it as a base for your trips.

Our tourists’, tries to account for all tastes:

Fiesole
The Florence area has solid Etruscan roots, and the people are very proud of this fact. Fiesole is just 8 km from Florence on a hill that overlooks the entire valley. This is a much older city than Florence: the latter was founded by the Romans after they conquered the Etruscan city in the 1st century A.D. Many famous writers, from Boccaccio to Carducci have sung the praises of this beautiful town where the Etruscan and Roman ruins have survived the wearings of time. Don’t miss out on visiting the archeological site with the Roman Theater from the 1st century B.C., the Thermal spas that date back to Silla’s time and the Etruscan Temple from the 3rd century B.C., and also the Archaeological Museum where several artifacts from the 15th and 14th century B.C. are kept.

Vinci
A place that is popular with tourists from all over the world, the Leonardo Museum at Vinci (38 km from Florence) is housed in the Castello dei Conti Guidi and includes collections of machines and models designed by the great Tuscan scientist, such as the amazing parachute, and many drawing of incomplete projects. After visiting the museum, find a bit of time to walk along the Vinci streets, a charming place that was only made into a town in the 1950s, during the five hundredth anniversary of the birth of Leonardo. Information about the Leonardo Museum: Tel. 0571/56055

Greve in Chianti
Greve is 30 km from Florence and is considered the "gate to Chianti!", the area where the grapes of the famous Tuscan wine are grown, that are protected by the DOCG label in this area. Greve in Chianti has always been an important commercial and agricultural center and is also known for the production of excellent Tuscan extra-virgin olive oil and the many delicatessen shops spread around the town where it is possible to buy local products such as finocchiona and marzolino cheese. Don’t miss Piazza Matteotti, the old asymmetric market square surrounded by porticoes and flower-filled terraces, and a glass of Chianti Classico in one of the picturesque wine cellars in the town.

Florence web sites

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