



Florence

Includes »

Sights & Activities.....	61
Courses.....	96
Tours.....	96
Festivals & Events.....	98
Sleeping.....	98
Eating.....	101
Drinking.....	107
Entertainment.....	110
Shopping.....	112

Best Places to Eat

- » Il Santo Bevitore (p105)
- » L'Osteria di Giovanni (p102)
- » Trattoria Cibrè (p104)
- » Targa (p107)
- » Trattoria Mario (p103)

Best Places to Stay

- » Hotel L'Orologio (p100)
- » Palazzo Guadagni Hotel (see the boxed text, p101)
- » Hotel Torre Guelfa (p99)
- » Palazzo Vecchietti (p99)
- » Academy Hostel (p100)

Why Go?

Return time and again and you still won't see it all. Stand on a bridge over the Arno river several times in a day and the light, the mood and the view changes every time. Surprisingly small as it is, this riverside city is like no other. Cradle of the Renaissance and of tourist masses that flock here to feast on world-class art, Florence (Firenze) is magnetic, romantic, unrivalled and too busy. Its urban fabric has hardly changed since the Renaissance, its narrow streets evoke a thousand tales, and its food and wine are so wonderful the tag 'Fiorentina' has become an international label of quality assurance.

Fashion designers strut their stuff on Via de' Tornabuoni. Gucci was born here, as was Roberto Cavalli who, like many a smart Florentine these days, hangs out in the wine-rich hills around Florence. After a while in this intensely absorbing city, you might want to do the same.

When to Go

Spring, before the high-season crowds arrive, is by far the best time to visit Florence – days are cooler, queues are substantially shorter and museums are less packed out. June brings with it Italy's oldest arts festival, Maggio Musical Fiorentino, that crescendos in a magnificent flurry of concerts in the city. Then there is autumn, the most foodie-fabulous time of the year to visit, with its abundance of freshly harvested *porcini* mushrooms and chestnuts from the forest and wealth of creative cooking it inspires.

Itineraries

David Tour Follow the world's most famous naked man: start with Michelangelo's original in the Galleria dell'Accademia, saunter past Piazza della Signoria's famous copy, then hit Museo del Bargello to see versions by Donatello and Andrea Verrocchio. Later, enjoy Michelangelo creations in the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana and watch the sun set on Piazzale Michelangelo. For a souvenir of your day, buy a replica in chocolate from Scudieri.

Fabulous Frescoes Begin with a coffee and breakfast at Caffè Gilli or one of its historic siblings. Then visit Domenico Ghirlandai's vibrant frescoes in the Basilica di Santa Maria Novella. Grab a casual lunch at Trattoria Mario or La Mescita before admiring Fra' Angelico's religious reliefs at the Museo di San Marco and Benozzo Gozzoli's gorgeous Cappella dei Magi at the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi (reserve in advance).

Both Sides of the Arno Spend the morning at the Uffizi (buy a ticket in advance), followed by a wine-bar lunch at Cantinetta dei Verrazzano or La Canova di Gustavino, or a *panino* at 'Ino. Refreshed, get set to embark on (should you have been smart enough to organise in advance) a guided tour of the Vasarian Corridor; otherwise, consider our Walking Tour with a detour along Via de' Tornabuoni for some upmarket shopping and a truffle *panino* at Procacci. Come evening, cross the Arno for a wine-tasting aperitif at Le Volpe e L'uva and dinner at Il Santo Bevitore, Il Guscio or Trattoria Cammillo.

GETTING AROUND

Buses (p119) link both Florence and Pisa airports with Florence's central train station, Stazione di Santa Maria Novella, from where the city centre is a 10-minute walk – spot the dome of the *duomo* and you're there! Florence itself is small and best navigated on foot, with most major sights being within easy walking distance of one another. Otherwise, there are bicycles to rent (p119) and an efficient network of buses and trams. Unless you're mad, forget a car.

Where to Stay

Florence is unexpectedly small, rendering almost anywhere in the centre convenient. Budget hotels tend to be clustered around the main train station in the Santa Maria Novella area and around the Mercato Centrale in neighbouring San Lorenzo. Santa Croce and the Oltrarno are hipper and packed with great dining addresses.

DON'T MISS

Florence's faintly lesser-known gems: Palazzo Strozzi (blockbuster art exhibitions), Museo del Bargello (early Michelangelo), Museo di San Marco (superb frescoes), Chiesa di Orsanmichele (medieval statuary) and Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana (Michelangelo staircase).

Blogs to Excite

- » Emiko Davies: www.emikodavies.com
- » Tuscan Traveler: <http://tuscanttraveler.com>

Advance Planning

- » Cut out the queue by booking tickets for the Uffizi and Galleria dell'Accademia.
- » Work out which museum pass suits best and buy online (see p61).
- » Reserve a tour of the Vasarian Corridor and Palazzo Vecchio; also reserve for Cappella Brancacci and Cappella dei Magi.
- » Buy tickets for spring-time's Maggio Musicale Fiorentino (p98).

Resources

- » The Florentine: www.theflorentine.com
- » Florence Museums: www.firenzemusei.it
- » Florence Tourism: www.firenzeturismo.it
- » Low Cost Florence: www.firenzelowcost.it
- » Lonely Planet: www.lonelyplanet.com/italy/florence

© Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'