

YOUR HOME AWAY FROM HOME

# HISTORICAL AND ARTISTICAL FLORENCE



## THE DUOMO COMPLEX

### *The Cathedral (Il Duomo)- Santa Maria del Fiore*

The Cathedral, or “Duomo” in Italian, was begun in 1296 by Arnolfo di Cambio on behalf of the Republic. When Arnolfo died in 1303 the works were continued by Giotto until his death in 1337. After that, the construction was interrupted and started again by Talenti and Brunelleschi. In fact, only in 1436 Pope Eugene the fourth consecrated the Cathedral with a solemn ceremony dedicated to S. Maria del Fiore.

You can find the statues of this architects outside to the right of the cathedral. The exterior is covered in a decorative mix of pink, white and green marble. The interior, by contrast, is pretty stark and plain, where the mosaic pavements are the business card. The biggest artwork within the cathedral is Giorgio Vasari's frescoes of the Last Judgment (1572-9): they were designed by Vasari but painted mostly by his less-talented student Frederico Zuccari by 1579.

### *The Baptistery*

Formerly the Basilica of San Giovanni (11th century), it is truly a building of great historic and artistic importance, where the most representative ceremonies of the city, such as the feast of the Patron Saint John, were celebrated and where new ambassadors were first received. Rich in works of art, the octagon-shaped building is one of the most original in the city. The Baptistery remained in use until after the Second World War. Many famous people, Dante among them, were baptized there.

### *The Dome of the Cathedral*

The Dome was built between 1420 and 1434 by Brunelleschi. The terrace of his marvelous masterpiece (height 114 meters) affords an incomparable panoramic view of the city and its surroundings. In the background, the bell tower of Giotto.

### The Bell Tower of Giotto

The bell tower (height: 84 meters) was begun by Giotto in 1334, at the request of the Signoria. After Giotto’s death in 1337, the construction was carried on by Pisano and subsequently completed by Talenti (1359). This bell tower is entirely decorated in hexagons and rhomboids, and niches with statues of Prophets and Sybils (the originals can be found in the Museo dell’Opera del Duomo). The lower bas-reliefs represent “The life of man in the creation and human arts”; those above represent the Planets, the Virtues, the liberal Arts and the Sacraments.

## THE CHAPEL OF THE MAGI

One of the most ancient palaces in Florence, the Palazzo Medici Riccardi, hosts the beautiful Chapel of the Magi. The building, which construction started at 1445 and was completed 10 years later by the great architect Michelozzo di Bartolomeo, is one of the first examples of Renaissance architecture in Florence, which, alone, would make the visit worthwhile. But there’s so much more to see inside.

On the first floor of the Palazzo, the Chapel of the Magi impresses every visitor with its breathtaking frescos from the 15th century, all made by Benozzo Gozzoli. You can almost feel like if you were back in that time when the place was a private chapel for the Medici family.

Three of the four chapel walls – eastern, southern and western sides – are occupied by the images of the Cavalcade of the Magi to Bethlehem, while the other one – which is the largest – shows "The Journey of the Magi". On the wall above the doors to the sacristies, you can see the "Vigil of the Shepherds awaiting the Announcement". On the walls of the shrine, the "Angels in Adoration" face towards the altar.

While looking at the procession of knights, among the followers of the Magi, try to find the portraits of members of the Medici family. One of them is on the wall to the right of the altar: it’s Cosimo Il Vecchio, "the Elder", on the horseback. Fair enough, as it was him who

commissioned the work, as well as his son Piero the Gouty and his grandchildren Giuliano and Lorenzo, after known as “The Magnificent”. This last one can also be seen at the fresco, as the young man on horseback leading the procession. You can also find Benozzo Gozzoli himself in the picture, whose head is turned, and the eyes look out towards the observer. If you are a fan of the Renaissance art, the Chapel of the Magi is a masterpiece you can’t miss.

## THE OPIFICIO DELLE PIETRE DURE MUSEUM

The Opificio delle Pietre Dure, that in English would mean “Workshop of semi-precious stones”, is much more than a showcase for objects made from stone. It was established as a court-founded laboratory specialized in semi-precious mosaics and inlays in 1588 and remained active for more than three centuries. Then, due to the change of tastes in art and architectural decoration, the Opificio became a restoration laboratory.

As you walk around the museum, you will find a room documenting the works produced during various periods, starting with the Medici family up until the mid-1800's. On the upper floors in the mezzanine, the space is dedicated to the craftsman’s techniques and includes a rich set of stone samples, workbenches, tools and examples of a few of the production phases of intarsia and inlay work.

On the ground floor, here is what you can’t miss:

- The display of Cosimo I’s curiosity and passion for archaeological marbles and some beautiful examples of artwork which competed with paintings and sculpture.
- The unused designs and decorative elements of the construction of the grand funerary chapel of the Medici family in San Lorenzo, such as the panels from the imposing 17th century altar.
- Examples of the sculptor Giovanni Battista Foggini (1652-1725) and a semiprecious stone cutter, Giuseppe Antonio Torricelli, who took this art to a new level combining techniques and expression.



## PIAZZA DELLA SIGNORIA

The Piazza della Signoria is the center of the political life in Florence, where all the political events of the city have taken place since the 14th century. And it all started in 1299, when the Palazzo Vecchio was designed by Arnolfo di Cambio to serve as a fortress, to protect the Signoria from popular demonstrations and revolts, and started to be raised. In 1314, it was completed with its gothic-style architecture and an elegant, slender and crenellated 94 meters high tower. Palazzo Vecchio is connected to Palazzo Pitti by the Vasari Corridor, an elevated enclosed passageway built by Giorgio Vasari in 1565 by order of Cosimo I de' Medici, in order to let the Grand Dukes move freely and safely from their residence to the government palace and vice-versa.

## LOGGIA DEI LANZI

But the Palazzo Vecchio is not the only must see in Piazza della Signoria. There's also an open-air sculpture gallery, called the Loggia dei Lanzi, that offers you a wonderful experience, both by its architecture – its curved arches foretell Renaissance classicism – and its works of art. Designed by Orcagna in 1376, it sits to the right

of Palazzo Vecchio. One of its highlights is the statue of Perseus holding Medusa's head, by Benvenuto Cellini (1554), a stark reminder of what happened to those who crossed the Medici. A curiosity: the name Loggia dei Lanzi dates back to the reign of Grand Duke Cosimo I, when it was used to house his formidable landsknechts (In Italian: "Lanzichenecchi", corrupted to Lanzi), or German mercenary pikemen.

## DAVID AND NETTUNO

The Piazza della Signoria bristles with politics and its sculptures bristle with political connotations. The reproduction of Michelangelo's David (the original one is in the Galleria dell'Accademia), sits right in front of Palazzo Vecchio, as a symbol of the Republic's defiance of the tyrannical Medici. The Nettuno fountain (1575), by Ammannati, celebrates the Medici's maritime ambitions; and Giambologna's equestrian statue of Duke Cosimo I (1595) is an elegant portrait of the man who brought Tuscany under Medici military rule.

**Smart tip:** if you are coming to Florence in the winter, do not leave without tasting the hot chocolate of RIVOIRE (Piazza della Signoria, on the corner of via Vacchereccia 4/r). For sure the best of the city!



## UFFIZI GALLERY

Considered the oldest museum in the world, the Uffizzi Gallery was built to house the municipal administration of Florence from 1560. The building would only become a museum in 1584, when the works of the Tribune, an octagonal room designed to be an allegory of the universe, were finished. Till today, its glass ceiling remembers the air; the mother-of-pearl dome represents the water; the red walls, the fire; and the ground of semiprecious stones, the earth.

The construction of the Tribune was commissioned by Duke Francesco I, son of Cosimo I, founder of the Medici Dynasty, to expose the works bought by the family. The Medici, in fact, were the great patrons of Renaissance artists who, mixing religious themes and mythology, portrayed the man at the center of the Universe and as the lord of his will. The interest and investment of the Medici in this artistic furor transformed the city into the cradle of the Renaissance, and the Uffizi in one of the most important buildings in Europe and the world.

Once there, these are the 10 masterpieces that you cannot miss:

### *Birth of Venus – Sandro Botticelli*

Botticelli takes his inspiration from classical statues for Venus' modest pose, as she covers her nakedness with long, blond hair, which has

reflections of light from the fact that it has been gilded; even the Winds, the pair flying in one another's embrace, is based on an ancient work, a gem from the Hellenistic period, owned by Lorenzo the Magnificent.

### *Madonna of the Goldfinch – Raffaello Sanzio*

This work was painted during Raphael's Florentine period (1504-1508), during which he was able to study the great masters of Florence and also to work for some of the more important merchant families. Such a modern image, yet it still contains symbolic elements from traditional worship, such as the small holy text in the Virgin's hand – a sign of her faith and a foreshadowing of the sacrifice of Christ, which is also evoked by the innocently fragile goldfinch that the young St John is holding out so that the Christ Child may caress it.

### *Holy Family, known as the “Doni Tondo” – Michelangelo Buonarroti*

Michelangelo painted this Holy Family for a Florentine merchant, Agnolo Doni, whose prestigious marriage to Maddalena Strozzi in 1504 took place in a period that was crucial for early 16th-century Florentine art. The presence of Laocoön made it possible to date the tondo to a period coinciding with the birth of Maria Doni (September 1507). The young nudes, whose identification is complex, seem to represent pagan humanity, separated from the Holy

Family by a short wall that represents original sin, past which there is also an Infant St John, which would seem to refer to the interpretation of the painting as being for a christening. The frame around the painting, probably designed by Michelangelo, was carved by Francesco del Tasso, an exponent of the highest level of the tradition of wood carving in Florence. It shows the head of Christ and those of four prophets, surrounded by grotesques and racemes, in which there are half-moons, hidden in the top left section: the emblem of the Strozzi family.

### *Venus of Urbino – Tiziano*

The evident eroticism of the painting, in fact, reminded the woman of the marital obligations she would have to fulfill to her husband. The erotic allegory is evident in the representation of Venus, the goddess of love, as a sensual and delectable woman staring at the viewer who could not ignore her beauty. The light and warm color of her body contrasts with the dark background, bringing out her eroticism.

### *Adoration of the Magi San Donato in Scopeto – Leonardo Da Vinci*

A document from July 1481 states that Leonardo da Vinci had received a commission from the Augustinian monks to paint a panel for the high altar in the church of San Donato in Scopeto, outside Florence's city walls. The painting, which Leonardo undertook to finish within 30 months, had the Adoration of the Magi as its subject, i.e., the celebration of the feast of the Epiphany when, according to St Augustine, all people respond to the call of Christ. For this subject, Leonardo studied an extremely complex composition, rich with figures, set out in a semi-circle, with the Virgin and Child as the focus. In the foreground, the kneeling Magi offer their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to Jesus. Leonardo has painted a background with ruined buildings and clashes between knights on horseback, while on the left, we can see work on a building, perhaps a temple, with in the foreground, two flights of stairs, like the presbytery of several Mediaeval churches (San Miniato al Monte in Florence, for example). The temple, which alludes to peace, contrasts with

the upset of the fighting horses on the other side. In September 1481, Leonardo was still working on the painting, but later he left Florence for the court of Ludovico Sforza in Milan, interrupting the painting he was producing for the church of San Donato in Scopeto. The Augustinian friars waited in vain for the artist to return and to complete his painting, until they decided to commission another altarpiece with the Adoration of the Magi from Filippino Lippi, which was completed in 1496. Leonardo's Adoration of the Magi is therefore a painting that is suspended in execution to an initial level of a rough sketch. Leonardo took the development of the work to different stages: some of the characters are barely sketched out, while others, as if to grasp an idea, are more finished. The sky consists of a white lead base coat and lapis lazuli.

### *Portrait of Eleanor of Toledo with her son, Giovanni – Bronzino*

This precious painting, documented by Vasari, depicts the Dutchess of Florence, Eleonora di Toledo, with her little son Giovanni. It was painted in 1545 by Bronzino, who was a student of Pontormo and the court portrait artist of the Medici. In spite of the official nature of the portrait, seen through the very refined clothing and the splendor of the jewelry, Bronzino joins the figures of the mother and child in an affectionate pose creating one of the masterpieces of European Portraiture of the 16th century. The painting has been in the Tribune since 1620.

### *Bacchus – Caravaggio*

In this painting Caravaggio demonstrates a masterful naturalistic portrayal of still life. His depiction of the basket of fruit and the cup of wine proffered by the god is surprising, with such elements interpreted by some critics as a Horatian invitation to frugality, conviviality and friendship. The sculpted figure of Bacchus with a stunned expression due to inebriation reproduces models of the classical art, in particular the portraits of Antinous, and is instilled with a languid sensuality. In the painting, eminent art critic Mina Gregori

detected a certain vision of antiquity celebrating the freedom of senses, as well as a reference to the Bacchic costumes and initiation rites practiced in Rome.

### *Virgin and Child enthroned, surrounded by angels and saints (Ognissanti Maestà) – Giotto*

Painted when the artist was already extremely well known and greatly in demand all over Italy, the masterpiece stands out for the naturalism with which it develops this traditional subject. The decorative elements on the clothing are reduced to a minimum to bring out the full plastic nature of the bodies, which are shaped by light and shade. For over a century, this composition was a model of inspiration for Florentine painters.

### *Madonna and Child with Two Angels – Filippo Lippi*

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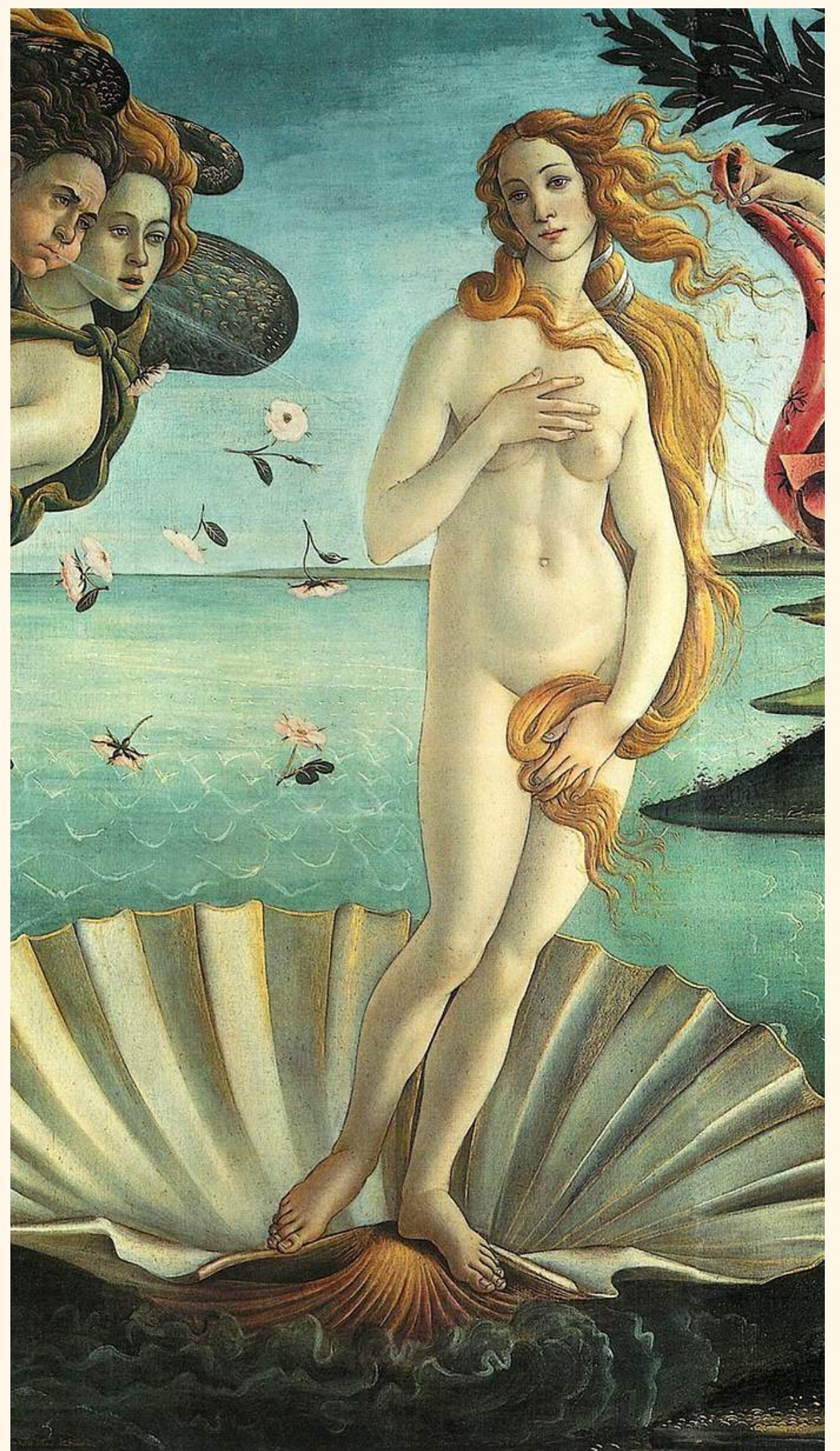
### *Madonna and Child with Two Angels – Filippo Lippi*

This is Filippo Lippi's most famous piece and features an extraordinary spontaneity in its portrayal. The Virgin is seated on a throne, of which it is possible to glimpse only the soft, embroidered cushion and the carved arm. She is intently gazing at her son, turning towards him with hands clasped in prayer. Her expression is gentle and indulgent, almost melancholy, as if she can foresee the painful destiny that awaits her son. The young Jesus, covered only in swaddling, looks back at Mary, holding both arms out to her, supported by two angels. The angel in the foreground is smiling and looking outwards, as if to bring the onlooker into the scene. The close-up style, with the group

Painted as little more than half figures, placed in a small space and bordered by a Serena stone frame, make this composition similar to numerous relief sculptures made by the Florentine sculptors of the same period.

### *The Duke and Duchess of Urbino Federico da Montefeltro and Battista Sforza – Piero della Francesca*

One of the Piero della Francesca's most famous works, the double portrait is representative of the relationship between the painter and the Duke and Duchess of Montefeltro; Piero was a frequent guest at their court, finding himself in a cultured and refined atmosphere which would soon become one of the most important cultural and artistic hearts of Italy. The master painter marries the strict approach to perspective learned during his Florentine education with the lenticular representation more characteristic of Flemish painting, achieving extraordinary results and unmatched originality.





## PONTE VECCHIO

It's the bond between North and South of Florence, a symbol of the city's beauty and strength. Ponte Vecchio, the oldest bridge in town – reason why it's called the Old Bridge –, was the only one across the Arno until 1218. Destroyed by 1345's flood, it was rebuilt and resisted against all odds, even to the World War II.

People say that Ponte Vecchio was spared by the Nazis during the German bombing in 1944 because its extraordinary beauty conquered Hitler's heart during his visit in 1938, when, together with Mussolini, he visited Florence in search of alliances. Mussolini even had two large windows opened in the center of Ponte Vecchio so that Hitler could admire the west panorama of the Arno River.

There is a certain beauty in this thought, but the truth is that Gerhard Wolf, the German representative in Florence, was the true savior of Ponte Vecchio – you can read a plaque on the bridge in honor of him. Anyways, Ponte Vecchio stood up while all the access areas to the bridge were heavily damaged and then rebuilt in the 1950s. Actually, for many years the Vasari Corridor was the only way to move from North to South of the city.

### Anti-rejection corridor

Talking about the Vasari Corridor... it was built in 1565, under the order of the newly-Grand Duke of Firenze, Cosimo I de 'Medici. Afraid of the rejection of the population – yes, it is an old worry of politicians – he asked the architect

Giorgio Vasari, who also designed the Uffizi, to build a raised corridor linking the Palazzo Vecchio to Palazzo Pitti, where the Medici lived. This way, the family could go to one place to another without facing the population. And he was in a hurry: the Vasari Corridor was built in just 5 months!

### Gold instead of trash

Ponte Vecchio has hosted all kinds of shops since the 13th century, including the “beccai”, the ancient butchers, and the greengrocers, because they could discharge their waste directly into the Arno. But it was not fancy enough for Ferdinand I – and certainly did not have the best of the smells – who in 1593 decreed that only goldsmiths and jewelers were allowed to have their shops on the bridge, in order to improve the wellbeing of all.

### Love, art and history

In the center of the bridge, with its back to the Arno, stands a statue of Benvenuto Cellini, a great artist of the sixteenth century whose masterpiece most known is the "Perseus with the Head of Medusa", that can be found in the Loggia dei Lanzi, in Piazza della Signoria.

From time to time, you can see some padlocks on the grids that surround the statue, symbolizing the unbreakable love of the couples who have been there. Passing on Ponte Vecchio, specially at night, is, by the way, an extremely romantic walk. A perfect spot for declaring your love, over and under a path of history, with a breathtaking view of Florence. If even the Fuhrer fell for it, why wouldn't you?



## THE CHURCH OF SAN LORENZO

It was built on a church consecrated in 393 by the Bishop of Milan, Saint Ambrogio. The present building, commissioned by the Medici, was begun in 1419. In 1442, Brunelleschi was appointed to the project and was responsible for completing the Basilica.

The interior, in the form of the Latin Cross and divided into a nave and two aisles, is certainly one of the masterpieces of the Florentine Renaissance.

Once there, walk from Piazza S. Lorenzo to Via dell'Ariento to find the San Lorenzo Market, maybe the biggest open-air market of Florence. Just walk around searching for clothing, articles in leather, souvenirs, etc. And don't forget to bargain! You can get real good deals.

## BARGELLO MUSEUM

The Bargello Palace was built to house first the “Capitano del Popolo” and later, in 1261, the “Podestà”, the highest magistrate of the Florence City Council. This “Palazzo del Podestà”, as it was originally called, is the oldest public building in Florence.

The museum houses some of the early masterpieces of Michelangelo, the “David” by Donatello, many works from the Della Robbia family, while Benvenuto Cellini is represented with his bronze Bust of Cosimo I.

The Bergello also houses a fine collection of Maiolica ceramics, textile, tapestries, ivory, silver, armours and old coins. The XIII century interior courtyard was remodeled in the course of history.

Top 5 sculptures:

- 1.The 1401 competition panels – a collection of bronze samples that were part of a competition, in 1401, for a set of bronze doors to be made for the Baptistry.
- 2.Donatello's St. George (and the panel below)
- 3.Donatello's Bronze David
- 4.Michelangelo's Bacchus
- 5.Michelangelo's Pitti Tondo





## ACCADEMY GALLERY

Planned in 1781 by Gaspare Maria Paoletti, it is part of the complex that also includes San Marco Church and Museum, the Opificio delle Pietre Dure and the Museum of Musical Instruments. It was conceived by Pietro Leopoldo in order to facilitate the study of the students of Fine Arts.

The most important work in the Gallery is the David, by Michelangelo, that was previously located in Piazza della Signoria. In the other rooms, there are the plaster cast model of the statue “Il Ratto delle Sabine”, by Giambologna, the “Prigioni”, by Michelangelo, and several works belonging to Michelangelo’s school.

## MEDICI CHAPELS



The Medici Chapels represent the burial place of the Medici Family and have been built inside some of the rooms belonging to San Lorenzo Church.

The museum is composed of two main rooms:

- The New Sacristy - made by Michelangelo between 1520 and 1524, it has among its monumental sepulchers, those of Lorenzo and Giuliano de’ Medici.

- The Chapel of Princes - designed by Buontalenti, it was built in order to house the mortal remains of the Grand Dukes Medici.
- Inside the museum there are several objects that constitute the precious Treasure of the Church of San Lorenzo.

**Tip:** the white marble sculpture “Night” (Notte), one of Michelangelo’s finest works, rests on the tomb of Giuliano de Medici.



# PALAZZO PITTI

There's no way of passing by Palazzo Pitti and not noticing its magnitude, worthy of the power and strength of the Medici family, who ruled Florence for almost 300 years. The Palace was not made for the family, though: the project by Filippo Brunelleschi was built in 1440 for the merchant Luca Pitti. At this time, the building was not sumptuous as it is today. It had only three large doors and a double row of seven windows on the façade.

After the death of Luca Pitti, the Palace was purchased in 1549 by Eleonora of Toledo, Cosimo I de' Medici's wife as a ceremonial residence. The main front was extended by Bartolomeo Ammannati, and the Boboli Gardens were created to become the model for royal palaces throughout Europe.

The will of the Medici of showing their power was even bigger than their obstinacy to get power, reason why they wanted not only the biggest palace of all but also to surround themselves with the best artists of that period and their artworks. The Palace was enriched with baroque halls and became the main residence for the King of Italy.

All this pomp and circumstance caused enmities, and the Medici found it was better to foresee possible attacks of public opinion, not just verbal, but to their physical integrity as well. And it seemed a great idea to have a corridor connecting Pitti Palace with Palazzo Vecchio – the Town Hall. So, the Vasari Corridor was designed and built,

allowing the Medici family to move freely and without risks from home to work.

## A great museum complex

The Medici Dynasty ended and the Pitti Palace went to the Crown of Italy, being inhabited by the king Victor Emmanuel II in the years when Florence was the capital of Italy (1865-1871) and was donated in the 20th century, more specifically in 1919, to the Italian State by Victor Emmanuel III, together with the square and the Boboli Gardens.

Today, it is three times the original size – the largest of the Florentine Palaces!!! – and houses a great museum complex:

- **The Treasury of the Grand Dukes** – once the summer apartments of the Medici family, it houses semi-precious stone vases, rock crystals, ambers and ivories, and an important collection of jewellery made between the 17th and 20th centuries.
- **The Palatine Gallery** – with its magnificent baroque rooms housing the Medici's own private collection of more than 500 artworks, including the world largest collection of Raffaello's artworks, and others by Tiziano, Botticelli, Caravaggio, etc.
- **The Gallery of Modern Art** – A great collection of paintings and sculptures, ranging from the end of the 18th century until the first decades of the 20th century, which are still being added to through donations and purchases. In addition to the exceptional works of art of F. Hayez, T. Signorini, G. Fattori, C. Pissarro, among others, a magnificent view over Florence and the Boboli Gardens is a master piece.
- **The Museum of Costume and Fashion** – the first State museum dedicated to the history of fashion and its social significance is a journey through a gallery of clothes and accessories from the 16th century to the 21st. There, among other unbelievable vests, you will be able to see the 16th-century funeral clothing of Cosimo I de' Medici, Eleonora of Toledo and their son Garzia de' Medici, completely restored.

## CHURCH AND MUSEUM OF ORSANMICHELE

The XIII century building used to be the Oratory of San Michele: that's the origin of the name "Orsanmichele".

It became a place of worship in the XV century, when it was turned into the church representing the Arts and Guilds that commissioned the statues for the external aedicules dedicated to the patron saints.

They were later placed in the museum on the first and second floors and replaced by copies.

## THE CHURCH OF SANTA MARIA NOVELLA



Santa Maria Novella was begun by the Architect Friars Sisto and Ristoro in 1246 and finished by Jacopo Talenti in 1360. The interior, of Gothic-Roman style, is divided into a nave and two aisles. The bell tower dates back to the 14th century. Once there, don't leave without visiting the magnificent thirteenth-century cloisters, on the left of the Church.

What else you can't miss:

Filippo Strozzi Chapel – located in the east (right) transept between the Bardi Chapel and the Tornabuoni (or Maggiore) Chapel.

The Tornabuoni Chapel (Maggiore Chapel) – the largest chapel in the Basilica of Santa Maria Novella, dedicated to the Virgin Mary, the church's titular saint.

Masaccio's Holy Trinity – in the third arcade of the left nave, in place of the altar, you can admire the fresco of the Holy Trinity (1425-1426) by Tommaso Guidi, known as Masaccio.

## PALAZZO DAVANZATI

Let's make a journey into the traditions of ancient merchants, Medieval meals and domestic life and marriage on the 16th century? Visiting Palazzo Davanzati is diving in Florentine history culture, especially regarding the domestic life, because each floor features spaces dedicated to the private life of the family of Bernardo Davanzati, a successful merchant as well as a famous historian and intellectual.

Also known as the Museum of the Historic Florentine House (Museo della Casa Fiorentina Antica), it was inaugurated as a state museum in 1956, but it was built centuries before, in the mid-1300s, and was inhabited by the The Davanzati family from the late sixteenth century until 1838, the year of the tragic death of the family's last heir, Carlo.

The walls of the main rooms and the exquisite bedrooms were decorated with frescoes and in winter covered by tapestries to keep the warmth in. Nowadays, Palazzo Davanzati houses a diverse collection of sculptures, paintings, furniture, ceramics, lace, and historic objects of daily use.

## THE CHURCH OF SAN MARCO

It was founded in the XIII century by the Silvestrine monks. Beato Angelico, Dominican friar and artist of the early Renaissance period, worked and lived here.

The Cloister of Sant'Antonio is decorated with frescoes by Fra Angelico and other Florentine artists.

Inside the "Ospizio dei Pellegrini", where the pilgrims were given hospitality, there is a great collection of Fra Angelico and his students.

On top of the stairway that leads to the dormitory there is the "Annunciation" by Fra

Angelico (1440), distinguished for its grace and tenderness.

San Marco Museum

It is located inside the ex-convent of the Dominican friars, that was restored and enlarged by Michelozzo on commission by Cosimo il Vecchio de’ Medici. Besides the works by Angelico, the museum hosts a magnificent “Last Supper” frescoed by Ghirlandaio at the end of the XVI century and, in the Library a fine collection of books belonging to the Enlightenment. Precious relics and a rare collection of bells are exhibited in the cellars.

San Marco Square

Thousands of people coming and going – among students, workers and travelers – and public transport options to take you almost everywhere in Florence. This is one way of describing Piazza San Marco, named after the fabulous church of San Marco, which is right there. In the center of the square, there is a bronze statue portraying General Manfredo Fanti, a soldier and leader in battles for Italian independence and unification. From there you can reach some highlights of the city:

- Church and Museum of San Marco
- Piazza SS Annunziata
- Opificio delle Pietre Dure
- Accademia
- Duomo

SAN MINIATO AL MONTE

Built between the XI and XIII century, the Church of San Miniato al Monte stands atop one of the highest points in the city. It has been described as one of the finest Romanesque structures in Tuscany. The splendid facade is made of white and green marble and the central mosaic portrays St. Miniato, the Virgin and Christ. On top of the

facade, as well as inside the Church, there are representations of the eagle, symbol of “Arte di Calimala” (cloth merchants’ guild), that financed the construction of this Church on the spot where there first was a little oratory dedicated to Christian martyr San Miniato. In April 27th 1018, with the authoritative “Charta ordinationis”, the Florentine bishop Ildebrando recovered the relics of the martyr Miniato, an Armenian exile killed in the 250 by the soldiers of Emperor Decius, among the ruins of the previous Carolingian church, and placed them more dignified in an altar destined to become the first true foundation stone of a new Romanesque Basilica. The bishop then gave the pastoral care to a priest of his presbytery, named Drogo, to be the first abbot of a monastic community called to live on the hill of San Miniato according to the Rule of St. Benedict. Since then, the monks of San Miniato al Monte have kept a "prophetic dream of peace". And in turbulent times as the world is living today, it seems a good idea to celebrate this peace, rediscovering, sharing and assimilating its meaning. San Miniato al Monte has 10 centuries of history, a wonderful trajectory of beauty, faith and hope. Through all this years, San Miniato al Monte has always embellished art and wisdom in this place that has been offered to generations of pilgrims and visitors of all origins and convictions as a space of peace, hope, reflection, by the great artists of the past, in very recent times, to representative figures such as the Dalai Lama, Paul Evdokimov, Marguerite Yourcenar, Kofi Annan, Thich Nhat Hanh and many others.



## ROMAN THEATRE AND THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AREA OF FIESOLE

Fiesole offers a great view of Florence, specially at night, but this is not the only reason to visit the city. The Archaeological Area, composed by a temple, the Roman Theatre and the Baths is so worth going.

The Roman Theatre was built between the 1st century BC and 1st century AD. The systematic excavations started in 1870 and finished between 1882 and 1900; meanwhile the left tiers (cavea) were rebuilt for public use.

The Thermal Baths were also built in the 1st century B.C. in the eastern part of the Archaeological Area. They were discovered between 1882 and 1900 and hurriedly restored before the end of archaeological excavations.

During the excavations, ruins of a monumental staircase that seemed to be part of a roman building were discovered in 1872. The building was than understood by archeologists to be a roman temple from the 4th century BC. New excavations between 1952 and 1965 also brought to light the etruscan temple (6th century BC).

Nowadays, a lot of events happens at the Archaeological Area, as the Estate Fiesolana, exhibitions, guided visits and tours, activities for families and children, educational services like workshops for schools and many other events.

## THE LAST SUPPER OF SAN SALVI

Andrea del Sarto, also known as the flawless painter, is the author of the Last Supper kept in the Great Refectory of the San Salvi convent. The monastery was founded by Saint Giangualberto in 1048 and dedicated it to Saind Michael in San Salvi.

At the sixteenth century, thanks to large donations by the Abbot Ilario Panichi, the Great Refectory was added to the complex with an

adjoining lavatory room and kitchen. Once it was completed, the wealthy donator entrusted Andrea del Sarto with the decoration of the Cenacolo along the back wall measuring 462 x 872 cm.

The Last Supper was made in 1527, in only 64 workdays. Very impressive time for its complexity. Here are some tips for you to enjoy the best details of this masterpiece:

- Note how the beloved Apostle John reaches out with one of the most touching expressions of the entire painting: his and Jesus' fingers are twisted into the most delicate gesture of affection.
- On the upper part, the most original part of the painting: a foreshortened balcony where two characters, surrounded by a sunset light, are assisting to the Last Supper.
- The skillful use of light and shade gives the fabrics the idea of movement and adds plasticity to each figure.

## THE FLORENTINE SYNAGOGUE

Inaugurated in 1882, a few years after the Emancipation of Italian Jews, which took place in 1861 with the proclamation of the Unification of Italy, the Florentine Synagogue is one of the most significant examples in Europe of the exotic Moorish style with Arabic and Byzantine elements, which characterizes both the outside – with the imposing façade covered with slabs of white travertine and pink limestone, the central dome and those of the lateral towers covered in copper (originally gilded), the portals in walnut – and the inside, with its furnishing in wood.

The climate of emancipation helped to inspire its construction, that is when two processes apparently opposed occurred, but in reality they were very close to each other: the assimilation of the Christian basilic models and the ancient Spanish Synagogues, and the search for a Jewish identity that shows itself outside even through an architecture with its own characteristics. The overall result, read in the light of the eighteenth-century Eclecticism, was something new, combining Moorish, Romanesque and

Byzantine elements.

The façade is divided into three dimensions in terms of width and length, and it is covered with blocks of white and pink stone. There are three front entrances, marked by Moorish arches. The hall of worship is a square plan with two side aisles and an apse on the bottom, within which is located the Aron ha-Kodesh covered with a Venetian mosaic.

As for the walls, they are painted with luminous golden arabesques and geometric motifs by Giovanni Panti. The large dome, which measures 47 meters outside, and 34 meters inside, is divided into segments with single-lancet windows closed by wooden gratings, as well as the central eye, which brings light to the center of the hall.

The benches, the podium, the pulpit and the bronze lamps were designed according to a single project and were entrusted to the most important Florentine manufacturers.

That's why the Temple is considered one of the most beautiful and harmonious buildings of the Italian nineteenth century, an extraordinarily important testimony to the history of the Florentine Jews, uniting tradition to the most updated European innovations in architecture and décor.

## ST. MARK'S CHURCH

When St. Mark's English Church opened its doors in 1881, the idea was to offer a place where the tourists who were visiting Florence could worship God. Soon, it attracted expatriate English speakers who lived in town and identified themselves with its Anglo-Catholic tradition and the Renaissance 'air' of its interior decoration.

Inside a fifteenth century palazzo, the church glows with a rich dark vitality created a century ago by English and local artists whose work reflects the influential Pre-Raphaelite movement. Despite the damage caused to the interior walls by the floods of 1966, the church is still a work of art.

Today, St. Mark's Church still welcomes travelers from all over the world, reflecting the

Florentine multicultural diversity. It also houses many events, as concerts and opera performances.

## THE CHURCH OF SANTA CROCE



The largest Franciscan church in the world is in Florence! It is said that the Basilica of Santa Croce was founded by St. Francis himself, and in 1294, a new church of monumental dimensions was built – with the old and smaller one still existing. The project was entrusted to Arnolfo di Cambio.

The large and stately interior has the shape of an Egyptian cross and it is divided into a nave and two aisles. The rear section of the church was once a convent. The Refectory and the several Chapels now house the Museo dell'Opera di Santa Croce, the most important element of which is the Crucifix of Cimabue, seriously damaged by the flood in 1966 and recently restored.

The church is also special because it holds the tombs of many important names, such as:

- Michelangelo Buonarroti - front entrance, to the right at the start of the side aisle;
- Dante Alighieri - front entrance, to the right, just a third way down the side aisle;
- Niccolò Machiavelli - front entrance, to the right, halfway down the side aisle;
- Galileo Galilei - front entrance, to the left.

All this not to mention the wonderful architecture, both inside and outside the church, which was rebuilt in 1294 and the frescoes by Gaddi in the Cappella Maggiore, by Giotto in the Bardi and Peruzzi Chapels and by Donatello, at the south nave wall.

Don't miss the memorial to Giovanni Battista Niccolini to the left of the entrance, said to be been the inspiration for the Statue of Liberty.



## MONA LISA HISTORY AND WALKING TOUR IN FLORENCE

Mona Lisa, La Gioconda from Leonardo da Vinci's masterpiece was a real person. And we're not talking about a self-portrait of the artist, as you may think. Monalisa was a real Florentine woman, born and raised in Florence under the name of Lisa Gherardini. To learn all the details of this amazing story, we spoke to the author of the book *Mona Lisa, A Life Discovered*, Dianne Hales, who gave us this exclusive interview – and also prepared a walking tour so you can follow Mona Lisa's steps in Florence.

### 1- How did you become interested in Italy and, more specifically, Mona Lisa?

Years ago I came to Switzerland to give a talk and, on an impulse, decided to take a train to Italy. The only Italian I knew was, “Mi dispiace. Non parlo l'italiano.” I was enchanted by everything I saw, but I really wanted to communicate with the Italians who were chattering all around me. Back in the United States, I began studying Italian. My husband and I began coming to Italy every year on vacation, and as we made Italian friends, I kept working harder to become fluent.

My linguistic infatuation eventually inspired a book: *La Bella Lingua, My Love Affair with*

*Italian, the World's Most Enchanting Language*.

Through Italian friends and friends of friends, I became intrigued by the real woman immortalized by Leonardo in his Mona Lisa. Over the course of several years I walked the streets in Florence where she lived, knelt in the chapel where she prayed, ventured into the long-abandoned convent where she died—and wrote *Mona Lisa: A Life Discovered*.

### 2- Almost nobody knows that Mona Lisa really existed and even less that she lived in Florence. For most people, Mona Lisa is a self-portrait of Leonardo Da Vinci. What led you to go in another direction?

When I was in Florence researching *La Bella Lingua*, I read newspaper reports about the discovery of archival documents from the family of Lisa Gherardini, the real woman in La Gioconda (the Mona Lisa). Through a family friend, I met the researcher, Giuseppe Pallanti, who shared his findings and gave me a map of the city and marked with X's the places where Lisa had lived. During extended stays in Florence, I traced Mona Lisa's life by visiting the palazzi she lived in as a child, teenager, and merchant's wife, the churches where she worshipped, the convents where her daughters—and Lisa herself, in her final years—lived.

The consensus among art historians is that Lisa Gherardini was indeed Leonardo's muse and model. Art historian Giorgio Vasari identified

her as Leonardo’s subject in his “Lives of the Artists,” published when Lisa’s sons and some of Leonardo’s contemporaries were still alive and could have challenged any misidentification. Speculation about other possible models has run rampant over the centuries, but in 2006 an archivist discovered a margin note in a book that commented on Leonardo’s working on her portrait and was dated as “October 1502.” Everything about this identification has held up to intense scrutiny.

### 3- What were your main findings regarding Mona Lisa? What surprised you the most?

With a crinkled map in hand, I traced Mona Lisa’s life literally step by step, beginning in the dark, dank alley where she was born in 1479. I followed the route she would have taken as a bride in 1495 to her husband’s family home. I returned often to the street where she gave birth to six children and to the church where she worshipped. I sadly beheld the dilapidated former convent where Mona Lisa died and was buried at age 63 in 1542.

But the most surprising revelations concerned the lives of Renaissance women—from childhood to adolescence (when most entered arranged marriages) to their daily lives as wives and mothers. Florentine women were not

“liberated” in our sense of the word, but they were strong. They not only held up half the sky but served as the glue that held all aspects of Florentine society together. The woman whom Leonardo immortalized was no victim but a fully dimensional, confident, intelligent, intriguing, flesh-and-blood woman.

It was also a complete delight to meet the Princesses Natalia and Irina Guicciardini Strozzi, the fifteenth generation of Mona Lisa’s grandchildren (on their father’s side), who also are descended from some of Florence’s most prominent noble families. I saw some resemblance, both around the eyes and in the curve of their jawline. However, what impressed me most were their spirit and personalities.

Natalia, a ballerina-turned-actress, is more extroverted and bubbly; her younger sister Irina, more reserved. But both exude such graciousness, warmth, and charm that I had to wonder – although we can never know – Mona Lisa might have shared their ebullience. Both of the Strozzi princesses have huge, megawatt smiles—the opposite of Mona Lisa’s subtle grin. But their regal father, Principe Girolamo Guicciardini Strozzi, does indeed smile like La Gioconda. I know: I saw it when I presented him with a copy of my book on his renowned ancestress.

## Mona Lisa History and Walking tour in Florence

### 1. Via Sguazza

Although the Gherardini once ranked among the most powerful of Tuscan clans, by the fifteenth century, Lisa’s family had lost its wealth and prestige. The best house her father Antonmaria Gherardini could afford to rent was a converted wool shop on a narrow lane in the Oltrarno. A plaque and sculptural relief of Lisa Gherardini marks her birth place close to the lane’s intersection with Via Maggio.

### 2. Baptistery of St. John

Antonmaria Gherardini, whose first two wives died in childbirth, welcomed his first daughter into the world on June 15, 1479. Carried through Ghiberti’s gleaming doors, Lisa was baptized under the celestial gold-painted ceiling, covered

with glass mosaics to form a huge image of Christ the King and Judge.

### 3. Via de’ Pepi

In 1494, Lisa’s maternal grandparents arranged for her family to move into the palazzo of a rich widower who lived around the corner from their Via Ghibellina home on Via de’ Buonfanti (now Via de’ Pepi). Here, in March, 1495, in a strictly civil ceremony, 15-year-old Lisa exchanged wedding vows with 29-year-old Francesco del Giocondo, a wealthy merchant and widower.

### 4. Via della Stufa

The newlyweds took up residence in the del Giocondo family home on Via della Stufa, off the Piazza San Lorenzo. Eventually Francesco

bought a house (believed to be #23) adjacent to his childhood home for his growing family. Lisa gave birth to six children – three boys and three girls – but two did not survive childhood.

5. Palazzo Davanzati

To get a sense for the interior of a merchant’s home, I recommend Palazzo Davanzati, now the Museo della Casa Fiorentina Antica, which provides a vivid sense of Firenze com’era (Florence as it was).

6. Santissima Annunziata

Leonardo took up residence in this compound in 1500 after fleeing a French invasion of Milan. Leonardo’s father, who handled the church’s commercial enterprises, may have introduced his acclaimed son to Francesco del Giocondo, who provided linens and occasional loans to the friars. Francesco later acquired a family crypt in the “martyrs’ chapel,” just right of center behind the main altar. During one visit, I knelt in the confessional where Mona Lisa may have prayed.

7. San Domenico di Cafaggio (now the Centro Militare di Medicina Legale)

As many as half of the daughters of Florentine families who could not afford dowries ended up in nunneries--including two of Lisa’s younger sisters, who took vows in this convent.

Francesco and Lisa del Giocondo placed their ldest daughter in this cloister at age 12. She died, perhaps of plague or another infectious illness, at age 19.

8. Officina Profuma-farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella

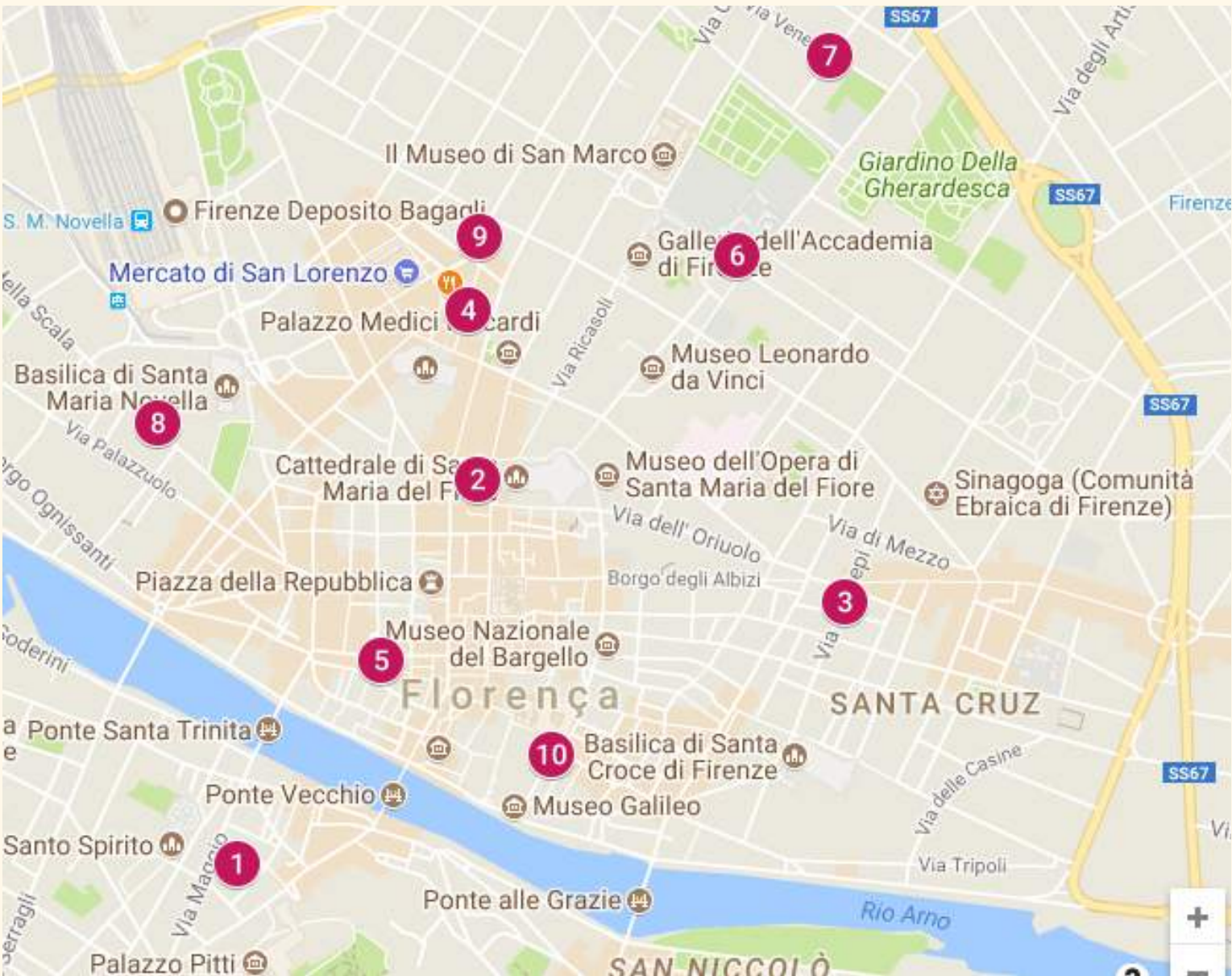
A ledger documents that Mona Lisa once purchased a vial of distilled “snail water” (acqua di chiocciole), used as both a cosmetic and a treatment for bronchial and digestive woes, from a convent apothecary much like this one. Established in the thirteenth century, this shop prepares a range of products according to formulas developed in Mona Lisa’s time.

9. Sant’Orsola

Just a short block from the del Giocondo home on Via della Stufa, Sant’Orsola was once an exclusive nunnery for daughters of Florence’s elite. Mona Lisa’s youngest daughter entered this convent as a teenager and took her final vows at age 22. After her husband’s death in 1538, Mona Lisa moved to Sant’Orsola, which provided room and board for widows, and chose to be buried there upon her death in 1542. Today the bleak walls of the hulking urban ruin are blotched with graffiti, peeling posters and bricked-up windows. However, developers are promising to restore its façade and resurrect the complex, perhaps as a music school, along with a restaurant, parking garage, bookstore – and a museum dedicated to Lisa Gherardini.

10. Uffizi Gallery

Here you can find Leonardo’s Annunciation and the Adoration of the Magi, along with Verrocchio’s Baptism of Christ, which includes an angel by Leonardo.



## PALAZZO STROZZI



Just a few steps from Antica Torre Tornabuoni, the Palazzo Strozzi is one of the finest examples of Renaissance domestic architecture. Nobody knows the name of the architect who carried out the project, but it is well known that both Benedetto da Maiano and Giuliano da Sangallo provided a model.

The first stone was laid in 1489, as a wish of Filippo Strozzi, but the building was only finished in 1538. The Palazzo remained the property of the Strozzi family until 1937, and since 1999 it has been managed City of Florence. After the Second World War, the Palazzo Strozzi became Florence's largest temporary exhibition space, hosting amazing exhibitions as the Peggy Guggenheim Collection (1949), 17th century Florence (1986), Gustav Klimt (1992), La Natura Morta Italiana (2003), Botticelli e Filippino Lippi (Italy's most visited exhibition in 2004), Leon Battista Alberti (2006) and Cézanne in Florence (Italy's most visited exhibition in 2007).

In 2019, the Palazzo Strozzi received the great Marina Abramovic, in an extraordinary retrospective that brought together over 100 works offering an overview of the most famous works of her career, from the 1960s to the 2000. Within the spaces of Piano Nobile and Strozzina, the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi organizes art exhibitions ranging from ancient art to the Renaissance, until modern times and contemporary art. There's also a permanent exhibition dedicated to Palazzo Strozzi, a caffè and a museum shop that overlook the Renaissance courtyard, a venue where concerts, performances, installations of contemporary art, theater performances and much more are organized.

## CHURCH OF SANTA MARIA DEL CARMINE AND BRANCACCI CHAPEL

Dedicated to the Blessed Virgin of Carmel, the church was built in 1268 as a part of a Carmelite convent which still exists today. The interior is a Latin cross and is composed of a single nave, with a frescoed ceiling.

Among the paintings from the XVII century hosted in the chapels, the Crucifixion, by Giorgio Vasari (1560), is one of the highlights. The Church of Santa Maria del Carmine is mostly known for the Brancacci Chapel, a masterpiece of the Renaissance. The frescoes that decorate the chapel are the result of the collaboration of two of the greatest artists of that period, Masaccio and Masolino da Panicale, and we should note the contribution of Filippino Lippi, called upon to complete the work fifty years later.

Don't leave without seeing the two layers of frescoes commissioned in 1424 by Felice Brancacci, a wealthy Florentine merchant and statesman, that illustrate the life of St. Peter, who can be identified by his orange gown.

It is said that one of the reasons why the church survived the intense fire that destroyed everything else in 1771 were these frescoes.



# MUSEO CASA DI DANTE

Did you know that Dante Alighieri is a son of Florence? The poet of the Divine Comedy was born and raised in the city, and the house where he lived – dilapidated by time and rebuilt in the first decade of the 20th century – is nowadays a museum. On Museo Casa di Dante’s three floors, you will be taken, through panels and exhibits, to medieval Florence in the time when Dante was alive. You will also learn about his private life and his political activity, and exile.

The museum is divided in 3 floors:

**First Floor:** displays a series of documents on some of the aspects of 13th century Florence during the youth of Dante, and it is devoted to the Guild of Physicians and Apothecaries, to which Dante belonged.

**Not to miss:** the recreation of one of the most memorable and epic battles, of which Dante himself was a part of, the Battle of Campaldino near the town of Poppi, between Florence and Arezzo.

**Second Floor:** exhibits documents relating to Dante’s exile. Also called The Political Room, this floor has panels that describe the internal divisions of Florence and the war between enemy factions.

**Not to miss:** the reproduction of a bedroom of the late 1300, an opportunity to see life as it was in medieval times.

**Third Floor:** the real stuff is here! You will be able to see originals of Dante’s work and also high-resolution copies.

A great opportunity to go deeper into the history of one of the most important poets of all times!

# CASA BUONARROTI

Anyone who comes to Florence makes every effort to see Michelangelo’s works. But not everybody knows the Casa Buonarroti, a museum and a monument at the same time, a place to celebrate the genius and his work.

It was not his home, nor where he was born, but the place, built 48 years after his death, incorporates two famous marble reliefs, masterpieces of Michelangelo’s early youth.

On its three floors you will find a collection of exhibits featuring rare art, paintings, sculptures,

majolica ceramics and archaeological findings.

There is also a substantial number of designs and drawings by Michelangelo, which are available for viewing on an academic level (upon request only), cultural exchanges and a select few works are on display on a rotating basis for the public.

Other masterpieces unmissable: the Battaglia dei centauri, an eloquent sign of Michelangelo’s never dormant love for classical art; the Madonna della scala, an intense testimony of the genius’ passionate study of Donatello’s work.

# THE NATIONAL ARCHEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

This is one of the oldest museums in Italy, dates from 1871! It doesn’t look old, though, as it was restored recently. In a city mostly known for its Renaissance art-work, the National Archeological Museum is a great opportunity to travel in the past and learn more about the former cultures – especially for those who have kids.

Here’s what you are going to find walking through its corridors:

**Etruscan Artifacts** – organized in two floors, it tells the story of the Etruscans, the people who populated Maremma.

## Highlights:

- **The Chimera** - a find from 1533 of a bronze fire-breathing female monster with a lion's head, a goat's body, and a serpent's tail.  
A curiosity: it is the number #1 on the inventory of the museum.

- **The Orator** (L'Arringatore) - a bronze sculpture which has been classified as a Romano-Etruscan work from the late second century or early first century BC.

- **Necropolis Garden** – one of the historic gardens of the Medici palaces, beyond the natural beauty, with season blossoms, it includes Etruscan tumulus tombs and sarcophagi, which turns it in an open- air museum.

**Roman Artifacts** – as the name says, this part of the museum shows artifacts from the Roman period.

## Highlight:

The statue Idolino, or Idolino of Pesaro, unearthed in 1530 in a Roman villa in Pesaro.

**Greek Artifacts** – this section holds lots of Greek artifacts, such as vases and other ceramic objects.

**Highlights:**

**The Hellenistic horse's head** – also known as the Medici Riccardi head since it was first displayed at the Medici Riccardi Palace.

**The François vase, from 570 BC** – Believed to be used for watering down wine, it was named after the archeologist who found it in 1844.

**Egyptian Artifacts** – it is one of the largest collections of Egyptian artifacts in Italy, losing only for the Egyptian Museum in Turin. There you will find collections of mummies, ushabti, amulets and bronze statuettes of several eras. There are over 14,000 pieces displayed in nine rooms and two warehouses.

**Highlight:**

**Everything** is a must see.

The collection is composed of the original Etruscan Museum, several Greek and Roman antiquities from the Medici and Lorena collections and, at the core of the collection, is the Egyptian Museum a gathering of artifacts second only to the collection in Turin, Italy.

The museum also has many exhibits of other cultures such as the Paleoveneti, Villanoviani, Anatolia, High Middle Ages and Renaissance. However, there are a few sections which are the highlights of the museum which truly merit your undivided attention. If you go through each section attentively, you will find that in an hour and a half – two hours, you will be able to see it all.



## THE INNOCENTI MUSEUM



This is, for sure, a very different museum from what you would expect to find in Florence. The Innocenti Museum reopened its doors in 2016 after three years of works, and it has changed a lot – for better! But the restoration didn't take away the history of the place, that dates from the 15th century.

The architectural spaces, created by Brunelleschi, are remarkable. The masterpieces too, especially those by Botticelli and Domenico Ghirlandaio.

Beyond the museum, the Istituto degli Innocenti has an important social role. Known in the past as the orphanage where children could be left anonymously, nowadays it offers services to children, pregnant women in difficult situations and mothers with young children, as well as helps to promote the rights of children.

It also offers recreational-educational activities to children, teenagers and families who visit the museum.

## PALAZZO DAVANZATI

A journey into the traditions of ancient merchants, Medieval meals and domestic life and marriage on the 16th century. This is how we can describe the Palazzo Davanzati, which is also an interesting testimony of passage from the medieval tower house to the Renaissance residence.

It is a dive in Florentine history and culture, especially regarding the domestic life, because each floor features spaces dedicated to the private life of the family of Bernardo Davanzati, a successful merchant as well as a famous historian and intellectual.

The walls of the main rooms and the exquisite bedrooms were decorated with frescoes and in winter covered by tapestries to keep the warmth in. And each room furniture date from the 14th to the 19th century, most of them from Florentine or Tuscan manufactures.

The most famous halls are the Sala dei Pappagalli and the Sala dei Pavoni, this last one holding the Madonna with Child recently attributed to the young Filippo Brunelleschi.

Don't miss the Davanzati's Family Tree, it is worth the look.

## CASA MARTELLI

Florence hides extremely important works of art in places that go beyond the Uffizi and the Accademia. One of these places is just a few steps from the Duomo and is called Casa Martelli, which was the residence of one of the oldest noble Florentine families for centuries.

The house itself is a real works of art. At the ground-floor, called the stanze ‘paese’ (‘landscape rooms’), the walls and ceilings are painted with trompe-l’oeil scenes; an elegant grand-staircase; and the spaces of the piano nobile, which include a chapel, a ballroom, a magnificent picture gallery, and a great hall and other rooms richly-decorated in shades of red and yellow.

Considered the last Florentine example, in public hands, of a collection formed between the 17th and the 18th centuries, the museum houses some masterpieces you cannot miss:

- Adorazione del Bambino, by Piero di Cosimo
- Two wedding panels (pannelli nuziali), by Beccafumi;
- Paintings by Luca Giordano and Salvator Rosa.

A real opportunity to understand the life of one of the oldest Florentine families and, with it, the culture and the history of a time.

## CHIOSTRO DELLO SCALZO



When you are in Florence, specially in high season, it is hard to find a quiet place, away from the tourists. But it exists and is just a few steps from Duomo. The Chiostro dello Scalzo has a very intimate atmosphere and so many beauties.

It is a little cloister, formerly the entrance to the chapel of the Confraternity of St. John the Baptist founded in 1376 and it was opened to the public in 1891.

There, it is hidden a great Florentine treasure: a fresco cycle by Andrea del Sarto and Franciabigio depicting twelve scenes of the life of St. John the Baptist, patron of the brotherhood and of Florence, and four Virtues.

## SANTO SPIRITO CHURCH



Apart from being in the coolest neighborhood in Florence – which is the Oltrarno – and from being in one of the most charming squares of the city, the Santo Spirito Church has many other attributes.

It is an ex-Augustinian Convent, from the 1300’s, which first structure dates back before 1252. The original model was conceived by Brunelleschi, but he died before the work was complete, leaving it to others to finish. The actual façade is from 1792.

Inside, the columns that divide the church into three aisles are the main feature of the basilica. A classic Brunelleschi design, with a mathematically symmetric architecture emphasized by creamy white walls and dark grey pietra serena stonework.

As you may know, Michelangelo found refuge in the convent of Santo Spirito in 1492, at the age of seventeen, right after the death of his patron Lorenzo “il Magnifico”. To thank the hospitality, he carved a highly realistic wooden sculpture which hung over the main altar until the French occupation of the late 18th century. It was lost at that time, but then it was found and re-establish in the sacristy of Santo Spirito in 2000.

## THE HALL OF PERUGINO

The name of Pietro Vannucci may not be so well known as other Renaissance artists, but it should. Perugino, as he’s called, has a whole room to his works at the Uffizi, but his masterpiece – the Crucifixion – is not there. To find it you must visit the Hall of Perugino.

The hall is inside the convent of Santa Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi and the work occupies one

whole wall of the chapter house. In portraying it, Perugino works with the room's architecture. The vaults of the ceiling separate the painting into three equal sections, which he has exploited to produce the illusion of looking outwards over countryside from within the columns of a loggia. A perfect harmony between the architecture and painting.

Other than the Crucifixion, the hall preserves the Virgin, St. John, Mary Magdalene and the saints Bernardo and Benedetto, executed by Perugino between 1493 and 1496.

## LEONARDO DA VINCI MUSEUM



Forget that idea of the traditional museum, with paintings, sculptures and silence... The Leonardo da Vinci Museum shows the inventions of the genius on an interactive journey through which you can not only learn more about the trajectory of this great inventor – as well as painter, researcher and more – but also be part of the process.

And, of course, his masterpieces – like the Monalisa and the Last Supper – are also present, but in a whole new and unique context: in high resolution reproductions.

## MUSEO GALILEO

If you are into science and great discoveries this museum is for you! Located in Piazza dei Giudici, in the ancient Palazzo Castellani, the Museo Galileo preserves one of the most important collections of scientific instruments and experimental apparatus in the world – more than a thousand!

The visitors can see some personal belongings of the Pisan scientist, as two telescopes and the telescope lens that made it possible to observe the satellites of Jupiter. Walking through the many rooms inside the building, one can go on a journey

following the discoveries of the astronomy, the time measurement, the science of war, the chemistry... All this in a very interactive way. Don't miss the monumental sundial outside the museum! It is a time-measuring instrument made up by a style casting a shadow on a quadrant. To read the hour and date, you must identify the hour lines and the calendrical lines closest to the gnomon's shadow. The date can also be read by referring to the Zodiac signs and the start of the months marked out along the meridian line.

## STIBBERT MUSEUM



If you are interested in armor, clothing and weapons of war, this tip is for you! The Stibbert Museum offers a journey back in time, through the objects collected by Frederick Stibbert, a collector from the 1800's who was lived in the Villa di Montughi, that houses the museum.

The collection is divided in 6 sections:

**European Armory** – white weapons and firearms especially of the 16th and 18th centuries, but also some pieces of the 14th century, archaeological objects and specimens of the 19th century.

**Islamic Armory** – disposed in two rooms, the collection of Islamic weapons comes from the Near and the Muslim Middle East. Probably a first group of objects were already kept in the Stibbert house, since the time of the grandfather of Frederick, commander of the forces of the Company of the Indies and Governor of Bengal during the second half of the 18th century.

Another conspicuous nucleus was acquired by Stibbert at the end of the century, after the dispersion of the Arsenal of S. Irene in today's Istanbul, which placed large quantities of weapons on the market.

**Japanese Armory** – the collection divided in three rooms has about 95 complete armors, 200 helmets, 285 short and long swords and arms in the auction, 880 tsuba (the saber guards) as well as accessories of great quality and workmanship. The objects are placed almost all between the Momoyama period and the Edo period (from 1568 to 1868), with some earlier ones, to be placed in the second half of the 14th century. The Quadreria – holds many portraits in period costume from the 16th to the 18th century. Some highlights would be:

- The Madonna by A. Allori;
- Twogreat Luca Giordano;
- A Madonna by Botticelli;
- TwoSaints by Crivelli;
- A table with the Madonna and Child of Verucchio; – A portrait of Francesco de’ Medici attributed to Bronzino.

**The Porcelain** – the collection reunites various manufactures,including three great servants of Ginori from 1750.

**The costumes** – the great difference from similar collections is that the stibbertiana is not limited to European materials, but also to the near, middle and in the far East, exposing Indian, Chinese, Japanese and Korean clothes in those destined for oriental collections. Thereis also, obviously, the European clothes, which include specimens from the end of the 17th century to the First Empire, including the dress of Napoleon I, worn by the Emperor to crowning the kingdom.

## MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY



As any other museum of natural history around the globe, the Florentine one is dedicated to the history of the Earth. The visitors will find fossils, molluscs, vegetables that will help them understand the evolution on the planet. One of the highlights are the skeletons of large proboscideans, including a mastodon with long

tusks and a squat build, as well as the skeletons of animals lived millions of years ago in Tuscany, when the territory was a savannah: the cavern lion, the leopard, the saber-toothed tiger. At the end, the Sala della Balena offers an immersive experience in which the visitor can walk 'on the bottom of the sea' next to the skeleton – 10 meters long – of a fin whale that lived three million years ago, and now exhibited together with the remains of the animals that fed on the carcass, from large sharks to very small bone-eating worms.

## FORTE BELVEDERE



One of the most magnificent views of Florence, for sure, is the one offered by the Forte Belvedere to those who visit this fantastic museum. But there’s so many other reasons to visit it, starting with the 16th century architecture created by Bernardo Buontalenti, Giovanni dei Medici and l'Amannati by order of Ferdinando I dei Medici.

It is a superb example of military architecture of the late sixteenth century. Among its main characteristics, there’s no high tower, as usual in the medieval fortifications. The plant is polygonal, which means that the walls have no battlements or massive to withstand the impact of enemy artillery. The wide and protruding corners are made like that to hold the artillery, allowing the defense of every side of the fortress to the ground.

It was built at the top of the Boboli Gardens to protect the Oltrarno and the Medici residence of Palazzo Pitti, and for centuries the Forte di Belvedere has fulfilled its military function, without however undergoing attacks either external or internal. The defensive strategic functionality was over in 1954, when the property was transferred to the civil domain.

Today the Forte Belvedere is not only an historical set full of memories of Florence and of the Medici Dynasty, with an amazing view of the city, but it also became an important exhibition center, where memorable events take place.