

## Florence



Florence is located in the heart of Tuscany, famous for its artwork, cultural heritage, and the major role it played in the Renaissance and Humanist movements. Florence is a beautiful city, and a favorite meeting place for visitors of all ages and nationalities.

### The center of the city

The historic city center (centro storico) is most representative of Florence. In 1982, the centro storico was declared a World Heritage Site by the UNESCO for the importance of its cultural heritage. The layout of this district follows a road system created by the Romans. In the centro storico, you will see the enormous, imposing structure of the cathedral Santa Maria del Fiore, referred to mostly commonly as the Duomo (from the Latin domus, meaning house of God), with its cupola designed by Filippo Brunelleschi, a beautiful dome that adds splendor to the city skyline. The city has also preserved its medieval network of streets, contained in medieval walls that were built in the 14th century to defend the city after it became famous and important for its economic growth. The streets are lined with regular, geometric Renaissance palaces such as the Palazzo Strozzi and Palazzo Medici-Riccardi, which once belonged to Florence's powerful, oligarchic families.

Florence is divided into five districts and the center is divided into four sections (San Giovanni, Santa Croce, Santa Maria Novella and Santo Spirito). The university and the Tribunale di Firenze (which is housed in the Complesso di San Filippo Neri) are also in this district.

Florence's museums, palaces, and churches house some of the greatest artistic treasures in the world. The most popular and important sites in Florence include the Cathedral, the Baptistery, the Uffizi, the Bargello, and the Accademia. The churches of Santa Maria Novella and Santa Croce are veritable art galleries, and the library of San Lorenzo is a magnificent exhibition of Michelangelo's architectural genius.



Wander some of the oldest streets in the city until you reach the Arno River, cross the Ponte Vecchio, and experience the "newest" area of Florence, the Oltrarno. Be sure to set aside time to see the vast and varied art collection housed in the Pitti Palace. When you grow weary of museums and monuments, head outdoors, spend a day at the Boboli Gardens or climb the hill to the church of San Miniato al Monte to experience an enchanting view of Florence.



The Uffizi Palace was designed and begun in 1560 by the architect Giorgio Vasari in the period when Cosimo de' Medici, first Grand Duke of Tuscany, was bureaucratically consolidating his recent takeover of power. Built in the shape of a horseshoe extending from Piazza della Signoria to the Arno River and linked by a bridge over the street with Palazzo Vecchio, the Uffizi were intended to house the administrative offices (uffizi) of the Grand Duchy. From the beginning, however, the Medici set aside a few rooms on the third floor to house the finest works of their collections. The Gallery was subsequently enriched by various members of the Medici family. Two centuries later, in 1737, the palace and their collection were left to the city by Anna Maria Luisa, the last Medici heir, and today houses one of the world's great art galleries.

For information and booking museum tours, contact **Firenze Musei** at +39-055-265-4321.



### **The Duomo, Florence's main cathedral**

Florence's cathedral stands tall over the city. The church of Santa Maria del Fiore, the cathedral or duomo, of Florence is a vast Gothic structure built on the site of the 7th century church of Santa Reparata, the remains of which can be seen in the crypt. The cathedral was begun at the end of the 13th century in the Gothic style by Arnolfo di Cambio, and the dome, which dominates the exterior, was added in the 15th century. Built by Filippo Brunelleschi who won the competition for its commission in 1418, the dome is egg-shaped and was made without scaffolding. The raising of this dome, the largest in the world in its time, was no mean architectural feat. At the base of the dome, just above the drum, Baccio d'Agnolo began adding a balcony in 1507.

The church was then consecrated and "completed" although the façade was only half finished (it was redone and completed in the 19th century). The exterior is covered in a decorative mix of pink, white and green marble. The interior, by contrast, is pretty stark and plain. Inside, the clock above the entrance was designed in 1443 by Paolo Uccello in accordance with the *ora italica*, where the 24th hour of the day ended at sunset.

### **The Cathedral:**

Open 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Thursdays: 10:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Saturdays: 10:00 a.m. – 4:45 p.m.

Sundays and religious holidays: 1:30 – 4:45 p.m.

1st Saturday of the month: 10:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

**The Dome:**

Open 8:30 a.m. – 7 p.m.

Saturdays: 8:30 a.m. – 5:40 p.m.

1° Saturday of the month: 8:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.

**Events in Florence****CARNAVALE**

With a grand parade of floats through the city, including an enormous puppet dragon, the Florence carnival highlights diverse world cultures. Local tradition is represented as well with colourfully dressed characters and musicians in Renaissance costume, riders on horseback, bands and dancers. The entire program for each edition is designed by the local city council along with representatives of all foreign communities who live in Florence, with the goal of celebrating the city's ethnic diversity.

**Maggio Musicale Fiorentino**

From late April through June, the Florence Maggio Musicale, May Music Festival, is a series of internationally acclaimed classical music concerts and recitals, opera and ballet in venues across the city. This is the city's biggest arts festival, founded in 1933. It is hosted at the Teatro Comunale, featuring an international program of drama, dance, opera and orchestras. For more information, visit

[www.maggiofiorentino.com/index\\_eng.shtml](http://www.maggiofiorentino.com/index_eng.shtml) 

**Calcio Storico**

Fabulous fireworks on June 24 conclude Florence's celebrations to St. John the Baptist, the patron saint of the city. In the late afternoon, the historical football match - Calcio Storico - is played in Piazza Santa Croce. The Calcio Storico commemorates a similar match played by a soldier trapped in the city in 1530. This Renaissance soccer game is played by teams from four neighborhoods in Florence: Santa Croce (blue), Santo Spirito (white), Santa Maria Novella (red), and San Giovanni (green). The game is a combination of soccer, rugby, and big time wrestling, all played while wearing 16th century costumes.

**Florence Dance Festival – Estate Fiesolana**

Every summer, the Florence Dance Festival takes place (from June through end of July) at the Teatro Romano in Fiesole, as part of the wider Estate Fiesolana program of music, poetry and cinema. It is really a magnificent experience to enjoy a concert in a Roman amphitheatre thinking of the thousands, if not millions, who have shared in the experience over the course of the past centuries.

**Sesto D'Estate**

Close to Florence, in Sesto Fiorentino, the Sesto d'Estate Music Festival offers several outdoor concerts in from mid-June through mid-July at the beautiful gardens of Villa Solaria. The summer festival includes theater, dance, music and cultural events. Highlights of past festivals have included Elvis Costello, Francesco de Gregori and Tori Amos.

More information on these and other events can be found on :

[www.discovertuscanycity.com/florence](http://www.discovertuscanycity.com/florence) 

or

[www.discovertuscanycity.com/florence/events/](http://www.discovertuscanycity.com/florence/events/) 

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