

Florence: City of Artistic Magnificence

It is incredible how many marvelous sightseeing destinations fit into the small town of Florence in Italy. There's beauty and inspiration at every spot your eyes rest upon, whether it's Michelangelo's David, the Duomo, Uffizi and the Gates of Paradise or the Palazzo Pitti, the famous wines of the Chianti region, a short drive away from Florence and, the mesmerizing sunset over the Arno. Florence can have such an uplifting effect on you that you might even consider penning down a sonnet about that delectable gelato you just had! It's simply unbelievable!

Beaches

Florence's close proximity to beaches is a real life-saver for beach-lovers. **Viareggio** in Tuscany is the closest beach to Florence. Lie back on the beach with your favourite drink in hand and get yourself an envious tan while you enjoy the sight of soft waves caressing the shores.

Head to Tuscany's stunning island, **Isola del Giglio** - just a few hours' drive from Florence. Its scrumptious seafood, clear turquoise waters and sunny beach are treats to die for. Scuba diving, hiking trails to other secluded beaches, gorgeous lookout points, and perfect picnic spots make Giglio a true gem!

Historical & Cultural Exploration

Florence boasts of a glorious testimony to its rich history, which speaks of an incomparable artistic patrimony and a vibrant culture. This town of Florence once mothered the famous fathers of Italian painting, Giotto, and Cimabue, besides many exceptional reformists of architecture, founders of Renaissance and, Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci. The museums of Florence are beaming with their spell-binding works of creativity. A lot of Florentine history has to do with art at its glorious best. The **Laurentian Library** by Michelangelo, the **Ponte Vecchio** by Taddeo Gaddi and the **Florence Cathedral** are some amazing stops you could make on your journey back in time to appreciate the history that paved way to Florence's unrivalled charm.

The Top Must See Sights in Florence

Piazza del Duomo – Situated at the heart of Florence, Duomo is the magnificent domed cathedral Santa Maria del Fiore featuring spectacular architecture, beautiful stained-glass windows, frescoes, mosaics, and Gothic facade. Check out the Museo dell' Opera, the octagonal Baptistery in the Duomo complex famous for the "Gates of Heaven" and climb the bell tower to be rewarded with a breath-taking panoramic view of Florence.

Galleria degli Uffizi – Witness the world's greatest art museum housing Renaissance art treasures by many geniuses including Rembrandt, Leonardo da Vinci, Van Dyck and the like. While in the gallery, glance up at the hallway ceilings which too are decorated with beautiful frescoes. Pre-booking is recommended to avoid the serpentine queues.

Il Gelato Vivoli – Make a pit stop at Florence’s best gelateria- Vivoli and dig into a cup (or tub) of the most delectable ice-cream your tongue has ever tasted!

Santa Croce – Located in the eastern part of Florence, this Franciscan basilica houses many splendid frescoes, paintings, and art works by many illustrious figures like Giotto. It is also the burial place of Galileo, Machiavelli, Michelangelo, among other great historical figures.

Galleria dell’ Accademia – Marvel at the ingenious works by great artists like Botticelli and Michelangelo, including his famous “David” and some unfinished “Slaves” sculptures by him.

Boboli Gardens – Created in the 1500s by the Medici family, the Boboli Gardens are located behind the Palazzo Pitti. This gorgeous Italianesque garden has now become an outdoor museum of garden sculpture including a variety of statues and fountains.

Best Time to Visit Florence

The best time to visit Florence is during the spring and autumn, when the climate is pleasant and welcoming. You can relish the captivating beauty of Florence to its fullest during these times of the year. Florence hosts a number of festivals during spring and autumn that draw tourists in scores from all over the world to events like the International Crafts Fair, Fashion shows (famous "Pitti" fairs), Festival dei Popoli, Antiques Biennial, Music Festival, and Opera and Theatre Seasons.

How to Reach Florence

Florence is well connected to most of the main places in Italy as well as abroad. The Florence Vespucci airport has both domestic and international terminals and is just 5 km away from the city centre. Florence can be reached easily from the neighbouring cities via motorways that connect Florence with Milano, Bologna, Naples, Siena, Prato, Pistoia, Montecatini, Lucca, and Pisa. It can also be reached via trains from neighboring countries.

Traveller’s Tips – Do’s and Don’ts

Travelling in Florence is a delightful romantic experience full of hidden treasures waiting to be explored, not to mention the amiable Italian locals who make for cheerful casual conversation buddies.

Following are some of the points to be kept in mind before you visit this charming town:

- Dress appropriately and sensibly according to where you plan to visit
- Do not stereotype Italians as loud people. Be polite and don’t be loud in English
- Acquainting yourself with basic Italian phrases will not only help you in conversing with the locals while in Florence but also earn you their respect

- Socialise with the locals but don't overdo it. For instance, when in a bar or shop, greet the proprietor "Buongiorno" (good morning) or "buona sera" (good evening). Be respectful.
- Dining etiquettes are important when in Italy and, tipping is optional but not the customary 15-20% like in the U.S