

Florence - Firenze

En 2022, nous sommes allés à Florence, en train ..., c'est l'idéal.

De Milan à Florence les trains circulent à 300 km/h.

C'est très facile, la gare *Florence-Santa-Maria-Novella* (*Firenze S. M. N.*) est à quelques minutes à pieds de la cathédrale *Santa Maria del Fiore* et son fameux dôme, le *Duomo* de *Filippo Brunelleschi*.

Nous avons trouvé un hôtel très abordable, très bien tenu et calme à quelque minutes du *Duomo*.

Tous les sites intéressant à visiter sont à 10 minutes à pieds du *Duomo*.

Tout autour du *Duomo* et à quelques minutes on trouve plein de restaurants à prix raisonnable.

Voir aussi :

Florence <https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Florence>

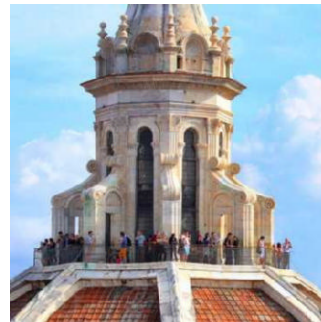
Firenze S.N.M. https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gare_de_Florence-Santa-Maria-Novella

Le Duomo https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cath%C3%A9drale_Santa_Maria_del_Fiore

Brunelleschi https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Filippo_Brunelleschi

Sur les pages suivantes quelques guides d'origine internet et très représentatifs

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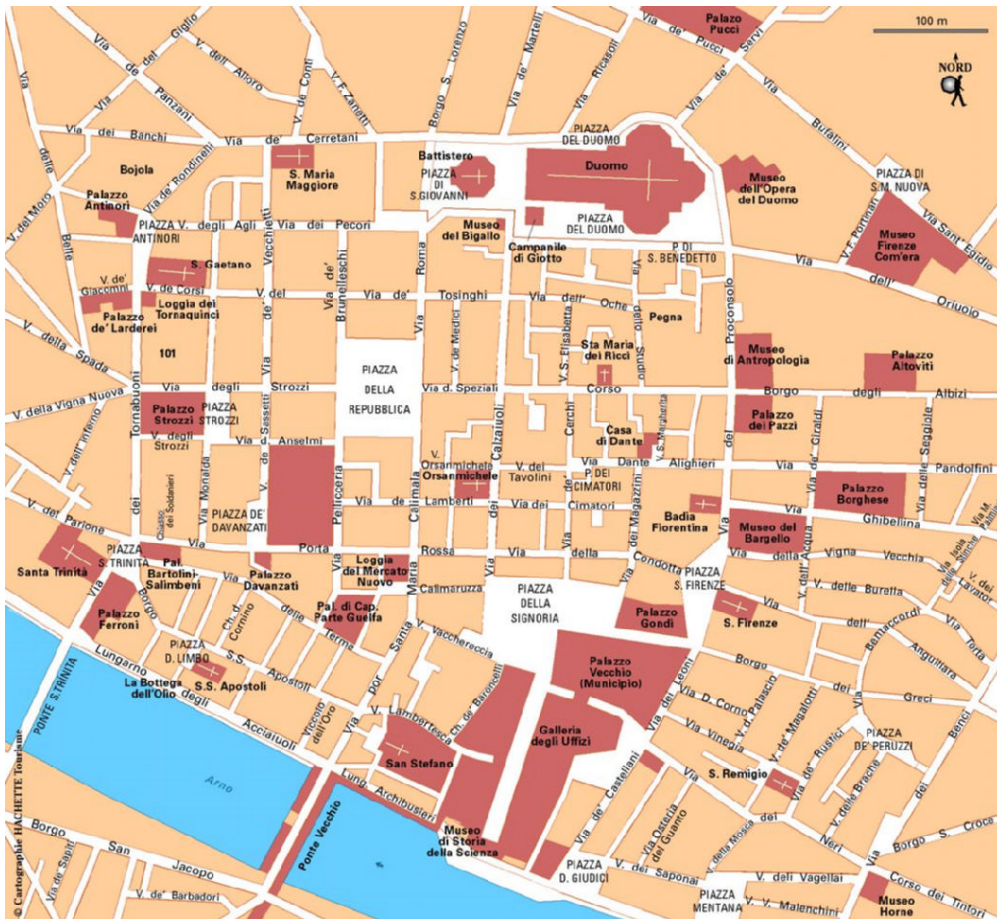
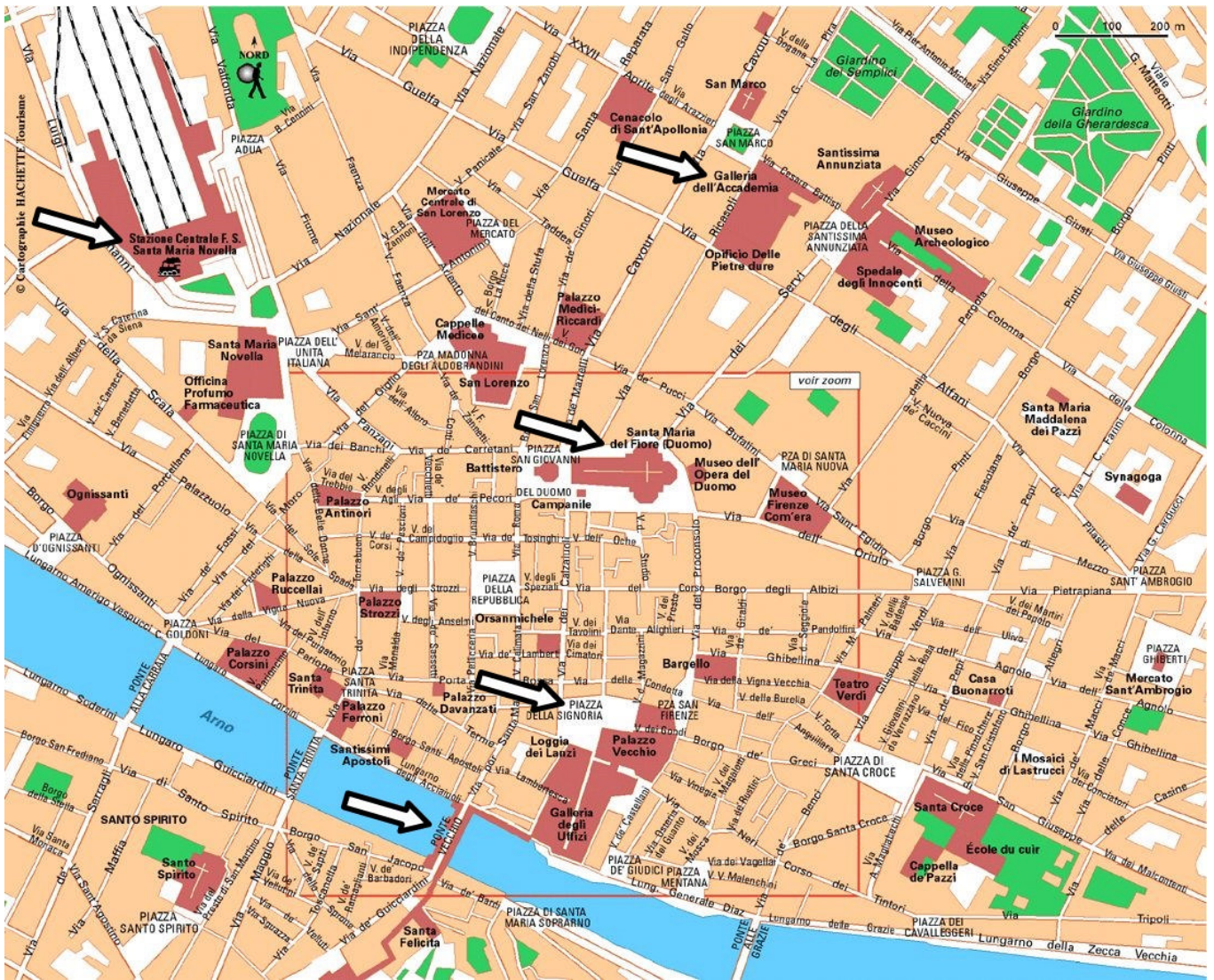


Immanquables : (et ce n'est que le point de vue de l'auteur de cette page)

- *Le David di Michelangelo Galleria dell'Accademia*, l'œuvre de Florence la plus visité [https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_\(Michel-Ange\)](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_(Michel-Ange))
- Monter au sommet de la coupole du *Duomo* https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coupole_de_Santa_Maria_del_Fiore
- Piazza della Signoria et les alentours https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piazza_della_Signoria
- Ponte Vecchio https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ponte_Vecchio



Voir où les trouver sur la carte ci-dessous.



En bruns foncés, les sites culturels

<== le centre

Toutes ces images sont d'origine internet

Guide To The Top Attractions in Florence Italy

Looking for some amazing things to do in Florence Italy?

Here's my complete guide to the top 25+ must visit attractions, sites, and landmarks in Florence Italy. You'll find all the best things to do and see in Florence, an overwhelmingly beautiful city.



cityscape of Florence

Florence is known as the “Cradle of the Renaissance.” With the best Medieval and Renaissance art in Europe, Florence is a veritable art lovers paradise.

There are so many amazing cultural attractions in Florence. You're spoiled for choice in the city of the Italian masters.

It would take weeks to see everything Florence has to offer. Any one of its dozens of churches, palaces, and museums would be the prize tourist attraction in a smaller city.

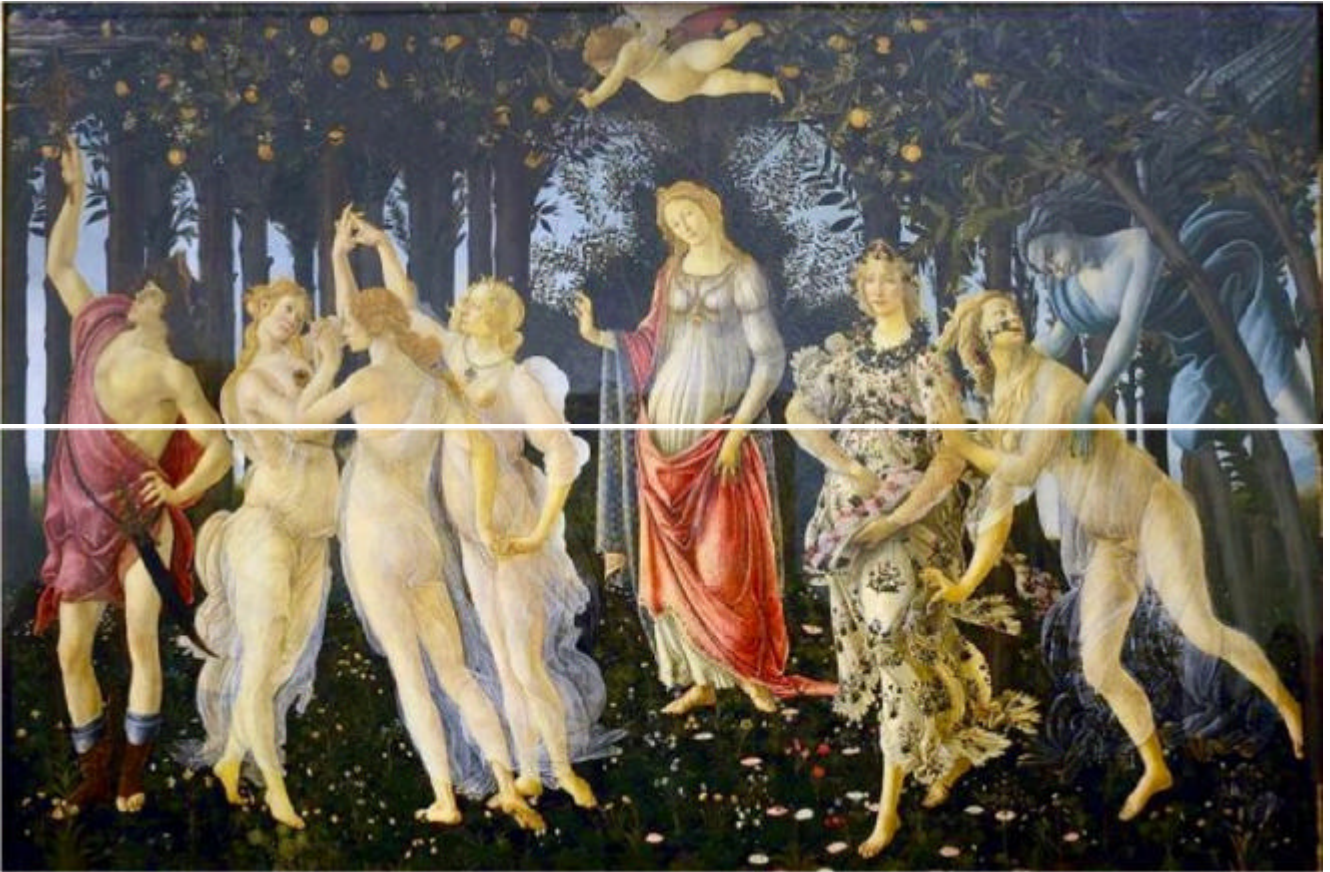
Florence isn't just a painting either. Florence is an exciting city that's alive, sensual, and romantic.

You can be seduced by [Botticelli](#) and awed by [Michelangelo](#), in a time tunnel experience. Not surprisingly, Florence's entire city center is a designated UNESCO site.

Let's peak behind the elegant facades and tour Florence's must see attractions. We'll visit frescoed churches, majestic cathedrals, elegant palaces and piazzas, and world class museums. And walk the same flagstones as [Leonardo](#), Dante, and Galileo.

Top Must Visit Attractions in Florence

Here are my picks for the 27 best attractions and things to do in Florence.



Sandro Botticelli, Primavera (or The Spring), 1482

1. Uffizi Gallery

Florence is synonymous with the Renaissance period of art history. The [Uffizi Gallery](#) is its premiere museum, and the third most visited site in all of [Italy](#). For art lovers, the Uffizi is a place of pilgrimage.

The Uffizi houses the collection of the Medici, a wealthy family of art patrons that ruled Florence for three centuries. The museum has seminal works from the 13th to 18th centuries.

Some of the world's most famous paintings are in the Uffizi — Botticelli's Birth of Venus and Primavera, Titian's Venus of Urbino,

Leonardo da Vinci's Annunciation, Caravaggio's Medusa and Bacchus, Piero della Francesca's unflattering portraits of the Duke and Duchess of Urbino, and Raphael's Goldfinch Madonna.



The Uffizi consists of 45 halls of art spread over two floors of the palace. If you have limited time, you should focus your efforts.

The must see halls include the Hall 2 (Giotto), Hall 8 (Lippi), Hall 10-14 (Botticelli), Hall 15 (Leonardo), Hall 35 (Michelangelo), Hall 66 (Raphael), Hall 83 (Titian), and Hall 90 (Caravaggio).



ceiling fresco in the Uffizi

Address: Piazzale degli Uffizi 6



Michelangelo, David, 1501-04

2. Galleria dell'Accademia

After the Uffizi, the [Accademia Gallery](#) is Florence's most visited museum. People flock in to see what is probably the world's most famous sculpture, Michelangelo's commanding statue of David.

The 17 foot sculpture is considered the embodiment of male beauty, a Calvin Klein-like model of physical perfection.

David was commissioned for Florence Cathedral. The city intended to place the statue high above in a niche. But they decided that David was too beautiful for that location.

Instead, David was placed outside the Palazzo Vecchio in the Piazza della Signoria, Florence's seat of government. Originally, parts of David were gilded.

But the gilded surfaces were lost during the statue's exposure to the elements. In 1873, David was moved inside to the Accademia.



Michelangelo, Awakening Slave, 1520-23

Michelangelo's Prisoners grace the Hall of the Prisoners at the Accademia. They are four unfinished male nudes that were originally intended for the [Tomb of Pope Julius II](#). You can see Michelangelo's approach to carving; the figures appear to be emerging from the marble.

Other must see Accademia masterpieces include Giambologna's

Rape of the Sabines, Pacino di Bonaguida's Tree of Life, Jacopo di Cione's Coronation of the Virgin, and Daniele da Volterra's Bust of Michelangelo.

Address: Via Ricasoli 58-60, near Piazza San Marco



Michelangelo, Bacchus, 1497

3. National Museum of the Bargello

The Bargello houses an amazing collection of Renaissance sculptures. If you like sculpture, the Bargello should be on your [Florence art bucket list](#).

The Bargello dates from 1255. It was first a prison and then the seat of government in Florence. In 1865, the Bargello opened as a museum by royal decree.

The most important works are in the Michelangelo and Donatello rooms. Those include Michelangelo's first major sculpture, Bacchus, and his Pitti Tondo, Donatello's acclaimed Bronze David and St. George, and Bernini's Bust of Costanza.

Commissioned by Cosimo de Medici, Donatello's Bronze David is a daring depiction of a biblical theme. It's the first freestanding nude sculpture since Greco-Roman times. But it's not a heroic rendering.



the Donatello Room in the Bargello

A nude David is peculiarly depicted wearing no clothes except for a hat and boots, perhaps to suggest his underdog status. The statue is affectionately nicknamed “Puss ‘N Boots.”

The Bargello also houses the Competition Panels. In 1401, Florence held a competition for a set of bronze doors to be made for the Baptistry of the Duomo. Artists submitted bronze samples.

Ghiberti and Brunelleschi were the finalists. Ghiberti won the competition.



Donatello, Bronze David, 1440s

For more information, here's my [guide to the Bargello's must see masterpieces](#). Click [here](#) to book a skip the line ticket.

Address: Via del Proconsolo 4



Brunelleschi's dome and Florence Cathedral

4. The Duomo, Florence Cathedral

Florence Cathedral is another top attraction in Florence. It's the most prominent landmark in Florence. It sits pretty in a pedestrianized piazza.

The Duomo was built over 172 years, beginning in 1296. The Commune of Florence hired architect Arnolfo di Cambio, a man responsible for building much of 13th and 14th century Florence.

Florence Cathedral is nicknamed the Duomo. It's also called the Cathedral of Santa Maria della Fiore, or St. Mary of the Flowers.

There was no such saint in real life. But Florence, or Firenze, means lily flower. So the city cathedral took on the symbol of Florence.

Florence Cathedral is Gothic in style, but not in the light and elegant way you think of Paris' Notre Dame. It's made of brown sandstone and beautifully faced with pink, green, and white marble.



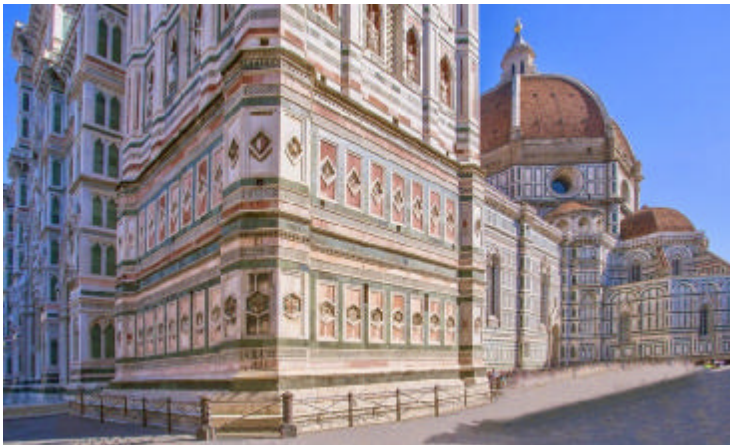
view from Florence Cathedral

For two centuries, the Duomo was the largest & longest cathedral in the world. Today, it's the third largest behind [St. Peter's Basilica](#) in [Rome](#) and St. Paul's Cathedral in [London](#).

Filippo Brunelleschi's magnificent terra cotta colored dome, begun in 1418, is the highlight. Brunelleschi was the perfect balance of architect and engineer.

He was a visionary and traditionalist. Brunelleschi's dome was almost as wide as the [Pantheon](#) in Rome. It's still the largest brick dome ever built.

While Florence Cathedral is elegantly "frosted" with colored marble on the outside, inside Florence Cathedral is austere and almost empty. You might even wonder if it was ever finished.



5. Duomo Museum

The Duomo has an absolute must visit museum, the [Opera del Duomo Museum](#). It's housed in the Piazza del Duomo at the back of Giotto's Bell Tower. It also offers a nice view of the dome from its terrace.

The first thing you see when you walk in the museum is the Hall of Paradise. The hall contains a magnificent reconstruction of a Duomo facade.

It was torn down in 1587 to make room for a Renaissance facade. But the intended facade was never completed. The reconstructed facade has exact replicas of the sculptures that once adorned it.

The other must see masterpieces in the Duomo Museum are Ghiberti's Gates of Paradise, Michelangelo's unfinished Florence Pieta, and Donatello's Penitent Magdalene.

One of Michelangelo's last masterpieces, the Pieta is currently being restored behind glass walls.

Address: Piazza del Duomo



Florence Cathedral and the Giotto Bell Tower

6. Giotto Bell Tower | Campanile

Florence's Bell Tower is adjacent to the Duomo, but still a separate building. When the construction of Florence Cathedral dragged on, the city decided to build something quickly for the citizens.

In 1334, the city hired a big gun, [Giotto](#), the best artist of the 14th century. But at that time, artists rarely doubled as architects. It's unclear how much design influence he really had.

Giotto died three years later. An architect named Francesco Talenti stepped in to finish the job. He was later named chief architect of Florence Cathedral.

If you have a passion for panoramic views, you should climb the 414 steps of the tower. The steps are narrow, which makes for a cramped but rewarding experience. But it's one of the [best viewpoints in Florence](#).

You can book a [2 hour tour](#) that gives you skip the line access to the bell tower viewpoint and a guided tour of the Duomo Museum.

Address: Piazza del Duomo



Baptistry of St. John

7. Baptistery of St. John

The [Baptistry](#) sits in front of the main facade of Florence Cathedral. Dating from 1059, it's over a thousand years old.

To locals, the Baptistery is Florence's most significant monument. Yet, it seems like an underrated attraction in Florence.

The Baptistery is octagonal in shape, inspired by ancient Roman mausoleums. It has three magnificent sets of bronze doors.

On the eastern side are the famous golden "Gates of Paradise" designed by Lorenzo Ghiberti and nicknamed by Michelangelo.

The originals are now housed in the Duomo Museum.

On the north side, you'll find another set of Ghiberti doors, created in 1403-24. The doors depict scenes from the passion of Christ.



detail of Ghiberti's Gates of Paradise

They were the result of the famous 1401 competition among artists I mentioned above. This competition basically kicked off the Renaissance era.

On the south side, the doors date from 1330. They were designed by Andrea Pisano, a student and collaborator of Giotto.

They show scenes from the life of St. John the Baptist. The Pisano doors were recently renovated.

Inside the Baptistery, the high altar houses Florence's most precious relic, an index finger of John the Baptist. This relic drew crowds for centuries.



the Last Judgment mosaic in the Florence baptistery

The Baptistery is lined with ancient Roman columns of gray granite. The stone was likely repurposed from the ancient Roman Forum down the street.

The highlight of the Baptistery is a stunning golden Byzantine style ceiling fresco. The mosaic tells the story of the Last Judgement, the apocalyptic tale where Jesus determines who will go to heaven and hell.

Jesus is 19 feet tall. There's a shockingly low number of people depicted as heading to heaven.

Address: Piazza del Duomo



Ponte Vecchio, Florence's ancient bridge

8. Ponte Vecchio

Dating from 1345, the Ponte Vecchio, or “old bridge,” is

Florence's only bridge to survive WWII. The Nazis destroyed all Florence's other bridges.

The only reason Ponte Vecchio escaped unscathed is that Hitler had a soft spot for the bridge. Instead of destroying it, he destroyed the buildings at both ends.

The Ponte Vecchio looks like houses suspended over the Arno River. It has three arches topped with a jumble of charming shops. In an urban setting, space was at a premium, so the bridge became a sort of mall.

Originally, the Ponte Vecchio housed unglamorous butcher shops. But the Medici didn't like escorting their aristocratic guests and diplomats over the bridge with the wafting stench.

So they swamped the butchers for goldsmiths. Now, you can buy expensive jewelry on Ponte Vecchio.



the Vasari Corridor, flickr Corridoio Vasariano

9. Vasari Corridor

The Vasari Corridor was built in 1564 by architect and art historian Giorgio Vasari. It's a one kilometer elevated passageway above the Ponte Vecchio.

The corridor was commissioned by Cosimo de Medici (the first Grand Duke of Florence) for the marriage of his son, Francesco I, to Joan of Austria.

The Vasari Corridor connected the Palazzo Vecchio (government headquarters) to the Pitti Palace (the Medici's official residence).



arches of the Vasari Corridor

It served as a private walkway for the Medici and high ranking individuals. This way, they didn't have to deal with the riff raff of Florence. The Vasari Corridor was unique for its time.

Inside the corridor, you'll find the portrait collection of the Uffizi Gallery. There's over 1000 paintings, including works by Filippo Lippi, Rembrandt, Velazquez, and Delacroix.

The Vasari Corridor is currently closed, with a 10 million euro renovation ongoing. It's scheduled to open to the public via a special ticket in 2022.

In the interim, you can walk in the Grand Duke's footsteps on YouTube [here](#).

Address: Via della Ninna 5



Gate of the Palazzo Vecchio

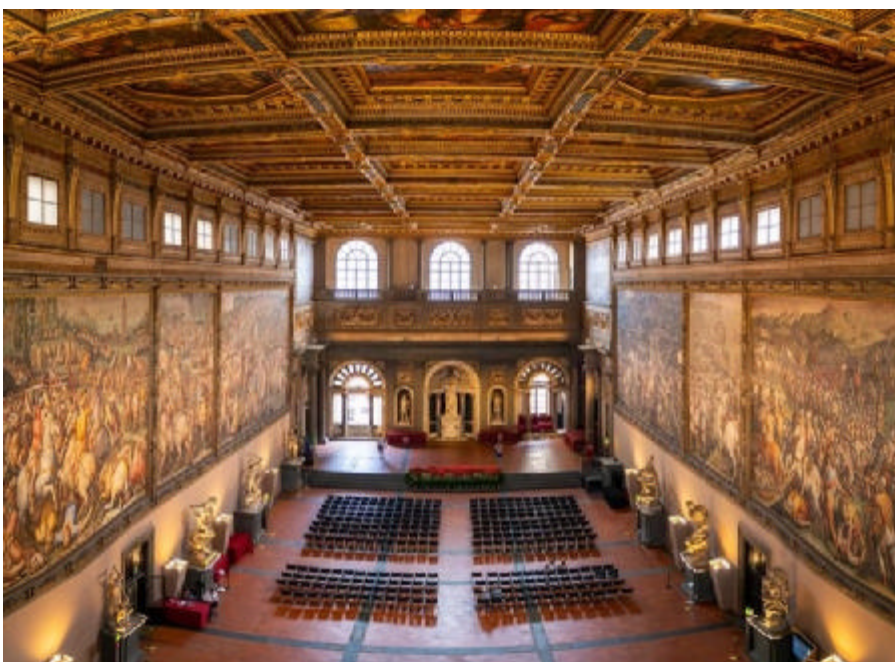
10. Palazzo Vecchio

The [Palazzo Vecchio](#) is an absolute must visit attraction in Florence. So much history has happened there!

On the exterior, the palace is rather homely medieval fortress, dating from the 13th century. Like the Duomo, it was constructed by architect Arnolfo di Cambio.

Steeped in history, the Palazzo Vecchio was Florence's seat of power. It was the home of the City Council that governed the Republic of Florence.

The [Palazzo Vecchio](#) is now a museum. It sits in the famous [Piazza della Signoria](#). The lovely square is studded with many famous sculptures (or copies thereof), including Michelangelo's David.



Hall of the Five Hundred

On the first floor of the palace, you can visit the Hall of the Five Hundred, awash with battle frescos by [Giorgio Vasari](#). Some art historians also think there is a lost Leonardo, the Battle of Anghiari, behind the Vasari frescos.

On the second floor are the sumptuously decorated private rooms of the Medici, with recently restored frescos in the beautiful Apartment of the Elements. You'll also find a groundbreaking Judith and Holofernes sculpture by [Donatello](#) in the Hall of Lilies.

The Palazzo Vecchio was famously the scene of one of Renaissance Florence's most brutal tales, the [Pazzi Conspiracy](#).

In 1478, the Pazzi family tried, but failed, to oust the ruling [Medici family](#) in a coup. They plotted to kill both Lorenzo the Magnificent (Cosimo's grandson) and his brother Giuliano.



Vasari frescos in the Hall of the Five Hundred

Lorenzo escaped and exacted revenge. In just a few hours, the killers and conspirators (including the pope's nephew) were captured. They were hung from the second floor ramparts of the Palazzo Vecchio. Incensed, the pope excommunicated Lorenzo.

The palace is also linked to another key moment in Florence's history, the rise of the fiery Dominican preacher Girolamo Savonarola. Savonarola denounced the excesses of clerical and despotic power. He told Florentines the apocalypse was coming and to save themselves through self censorship.

The doomsday preacher eventually ousted the Medici and established a theocracy in Florence. But Savonarola went too far.

In the 1497 "Bonfire of the Vanities," he destroyed works of art in the Piazza della Signoria. The pleasure loving citizens of Florence had enough and didn't want their cultural legacy destroyed.



bust of Lorenzo the Magnificent that greets you when you enter the Uffizi

In 1498, Savonarola was defrocked and imprisoned in the Palazzo Vecchio for heresy. After being tried and convicted, he was executed in the Piazza della Signoria. A circular plaque near the Palazzo Vecchio's entrance marks the spot of Savonarola's execution.

If you're up for a climb of 400 steps, the Tower of Arnolfo offers 360 views. You enter via the Museum of Palazzo Vecchio, with a combined ticket for Palazzo Vecchio or for an additional small fee.



ornate courtyard of Palazzo Vecchio

Address: Piazza della Signoria



Neo-Gothic facade of the Basilica of Santa Croce

11. Basilica of Santa Croce

The [Basilica of Santa Croce](#) is a must visit attraction in Florence for lovers of Renaissance art. The basilica dates from 1280.

It boasts one of the greatest assemblages of frescos, painting, sculptures, and funeral tombs in the world.

The highlight are the frescos by Giotto in the Bardi Chapel and the Peruzzi Chapel.

There are also frescos by his students Taddeo and Agnolo Gaddi. The ones by Agnolo are well preserved and have been recently renovated.



Tomb of Michelangelo in the Basilica of Santa Croce

Santa Croce is also the resting place of storied Renaissance luminaries. You can find funeral tombs for Michelangelo, Ghiberti, Galileo, Dante, and Machiavelli.

Santa Croce also houses the famous Cimabue Crucifix. The artifact was damaged in a devastating flood in 1966, but has been somewhat restored.

Address: Piazza di Santa Croce 16



nave of the Basilica of San Lorenzo

12. Basilica of San Lorenzo Complex

While Santa Croce holds the superior art collection, the Basilica of San Lorenzo is more famous. San Lorenzo was the official church of the Medici family. Michelangelo himself designed the simply stunning Medici Chapel between 1520-34.

The chapel's coffered dome is similar to Rome's Pantheon. The walls are clad with pink green, gold, and white marble.

There are two tombs decorated with allegories of the passage of time carved by Michelangelo — Dusk, Dawn, Day, Night. Night is regarded as one of Michelangelo's finest works.



Michelangelo's tomb for Giuliano de' Medici, the sculpture of Night on the left

In 1527, Michelangelo returned to Florence to defend republican forces during a civil war. When Florence fell, Michelangelo retreated into a secret room below the Medici Chapel until he received confirmation of a pardon from Medici pope Clement VII.

Michelangelo's secret room wasn't discovered until 1975, when a museum director spotted a trap door.

The room contained charcoal sketches and doodles by Michelangelo on the walls. The sketches could be identified because they replicated his known works. The room is scheduled to be opened to the public in 2020.



etchings by Michelangelo in a room beneath the tomb

The other thing to see in San Lorenzo is the Chapel of the Princes. This is the main mausoleum for the Medici Family (Michelangelo's Medici Chapel holds only the remains of two lesser known Medici). Cosimo de Medici commissioned it in 1568. But construction only began in 1602.

The chapel walls are clad with polychrome marble and precious stones. The cupola of the chapel features a fresco by Pietro Benvenuti. The sepulcher for Lorenzo the Magnificent is adorned with Michelangelo's Madonna and Child sculpture.

Address: Piazza di San Lorenzo 9



facade of the Church of Santa Maria Novella

13. Church of Santa Maria Novella

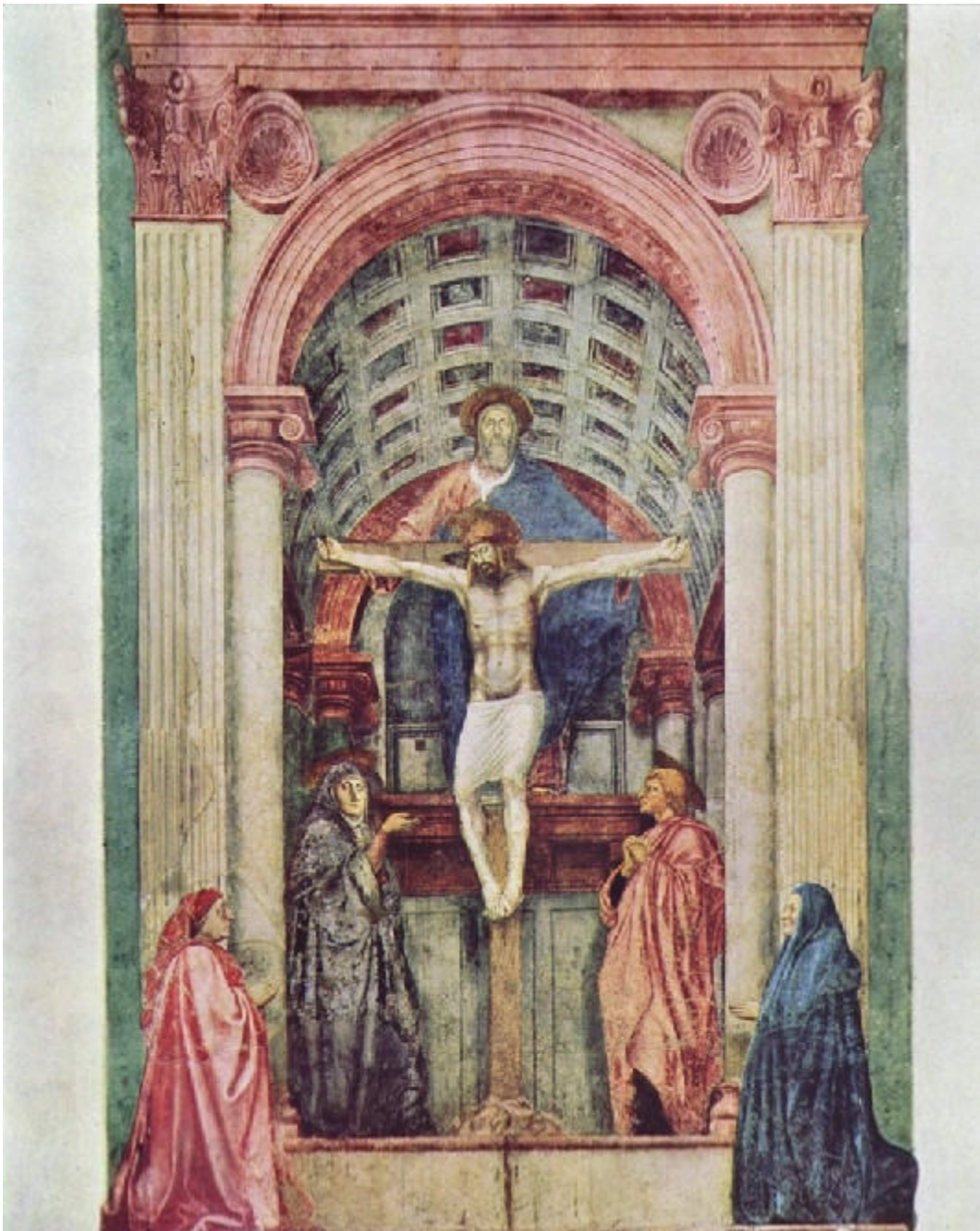
[Santa Maria Novella](#) was founded in 1279 by a Dominican order.

The basilica has a similar design to the Duomo and Santa Croce. Polychrome and white marble create a striking front facade.

[Santa Maria Novella](#) is a [beautiful church in Florence](#). It was founded in 1279 by a Dominican order. The basilica has a similar design to the Duomo and Santa Croce, with polychrome and white marble create a striking front facade.

The interior is a true marvel. It holds one of the most famous paintings in Italy, the Holy Trinity by Masaccio. Masaccio was an early Renaissance superhero, who tragically died young of malaria at only 27.

You'll also want to visit both of the Strozzi Chapels. The Filippo Strozzi Chapel is to the right of the main altar. The other Strozzi Chapel is to the left up a flight of stairs.



Masaccio, Holy Trinity, 1427

The Filippo Chapel contains precious frescos by Filippino Lippi, an early Renaissance luminary. The frescos, dating from 1502, depict the life of the apostles Philip and James.

The choir contains another series of frescos by Domenico Ghirlandaio and his young apprentice [Michelangelo](#).

The other Strozzi Chapel belonged to another branch of the Strozzi family. It was decorated by Andrea Orcagna in the second half of the 14th century.

Another highlight of Santa Maria Novella is the Chapter House, erected circa 1350, called the Spanish Chapel. It's a bit of a hidden gem in Florence.

It's a room completely covered with frescos by Andrea di Bonaiuto. The fresco cycle celebrates the spiritual and intellectual achievements of the Dominican order.

Address: Piazza di Santa Maria Novella 18



the white marble Tabernacle with the painting of the miraculous madonna

14. Orsanmichele | San Michele in Orto

Designed by Francesco Talenti and others, Orsanmichele is a well preserved and important 15th century Florentine church. It's eccentric looking. Orsanmichele rises up like a three story brown rectangle.

But it's a treasure trove of Renaissance sculpture — a sort of street view museum. Orsanmichele was originally Florence's central grain market. It was converted into a church in 1380.

Inside, the church has a spectacular bejeweled Gothic Tabernacle altar, with a painting of the Madonna della Grazie. Legend holds that those who prayed before her were granted miracles. The original painting was lost and replaced with a 1497 painting by Bernardo Daddi.

Orsanmichele is most noted for its incredible sculpture, decorating the exuberant Gothic facade. The facade has 14 niches, each one housing a statue of a patron saint commissioned by Florence's guilds.

Created by the best artists of the time, the exterior sculptures are now copies. The monumental originals are in the Orsanmichele Museum on the top floor of the church.



Donatello, St. Mark, 1411-13

By far, Orsanmichele's most famous sculpture is Donatello's St. Mark. It's the first truly Renaissance piece of art (sculpture was more advanced than painting).

St. Mark marked a revival of classical themes and naturalism. St. Mark was even given a receding hairline.

Donatello's famous St. George was also once at Orsanmichele, but was moved to the Bargello Museum.

Orsanmichele also has three sculptures by Ghiberti — St. John the Baptist (the first significant Renaissance statue in bronze), St. Matthew (Ghiberti's most important sculpture), and St. Stephen.

And also a famous sculpture by [Andrea Verrochio](#), Doubting Thomas. Verrochio was Leonardo da Vinci's teacher. Orsanmichele is right in the center of Florence, just minutes from the Palazzo Vecchio. But it's a bit of a hidden gem, where you can escape the crowds. Right now, the Orsanmichele Museum is only open on Monday and Saturday morning.

Address: Via dell'Arte della Lana



Palazzo Pitti, former residence of the Medici

15. Pitti Palace

The magnificent Palazzo Pitti is one of my favorite attractions in Florence. It's located across the Arno River, in the off the beaten path Oltrarno district that's now Florence's trendiest neighborhood.

The palace is one of Florence's most stunning architecture gems. Built in 1457, it was designed by Brunelleschi and built for the Florentine banker Luca Pitti, a Medici rival.

But, like everything else it seems, the palace soon became Medici property. In 1549, Cosimo de' Medici's wife purchased the Pitti Palace. It became the Medici's principal private residence, the [family's third palace in Florence](#). The Medici expanded it and placed 8 art galleries in its interior. READ: [History of the Medici Dynasty](#)



the beautiful Pitti Palace

The most important museum is certainly the Palatine Gallery. It occupies the left wing of the first floor.

The gallery houses an impressive collection of over 500 paintings, chock a block on top of each other amid lavish furnishings. There are works by [Raphael](#), Titian, Rubens, [Caravaggio](#), and other European and Italian painters.

Be sure to check out Botticelli's and Lippi's Madonna and Child in the Prometheus Room. Two of Andrea del Sarto's massive Assumption of the Virgin are in the Iliad Room. And, one of my favorites, [Artemisia Gentileschi](#), has another version of Judith in the Saturn Room.



The Royal Apartments showcase styles from three different eras of ownership. You'll find Baroque frescoed ceilings, gilded inlaid work, Rococo stucco, and red damask decorations.

The decor is definitely not to my taste, too over the top ostentatious. But amid the cacophony, there's a beautiful Caravaggio painting, Knight of Malta.

Address: Piazza de' Pitti



Palazzo Strozzi

16. Strozzi Palace

The Strozzi were one of Florence's wealthiest families. They were exiled from Florence in 1434. But, after accumulating more power, they made a triumphant return in 1466.

Once home, the Strozzi's first mission was to build a mighty palazzo as a symbol of their strength. They wanted to eclipse the Pitti Palace.

The [Strozzi Palace](#) looks like a small rectangular fortress. It's very symmetrical, with a stone facade that changes from rough hewn (on the bottom) to refined (at the top). The interior courtyard is impressive, surrounded by an arched stone arcade.

The palace remained in the hands of the Strozzi family until 1937. Now, it's Florence's largest space for contemporary art exhibitions. If you want to see well displayed art, this is your place. The Palazzo Strozzi holds three major exhibitions annually. Address: Piazza degli Strozzi



the beautiful Boboli Gardens

17. Boboli Gardens

The historic Boboli Gardens is the backyard of the Pitti Palace. It's the largest green space in Florence. The Boboli Gardens sprawls over 11 acres. The gardens are effectively an open air museum, with hundreds of nooks to explore.

re laid out in the Italian style, with beautifully worn Renaissance statues and fountains. The famous Fountain dell'Oceano and the Bathing Venus were sculpted by the underrated Giambologna. After Michelangelo, he was the next best sculptor of the time.

The Grotto Grande, also known as the Buontalenti Grotto's, is a fascinating place. In 16th century Tuscany, it was the fashion to build decorative grottos reconstructing natural caves.

The grotto once had a fresco by Michelangelo (now in the Accademia) and has copies of his four slaves.



Boboli Gardens

An interesting sculpture is the modern Cracked Face Statue, Tindaro Screpollato, by Igor Mitoraj.

The bronze face is huge, with green streaks running through the cracks that look like tears. The crumbling visage symbolizes both human fragility and strength.

In Renaissance times, the Boboli Gardens was the sole province of the Medici. Now, other citizens are granted access. You can enjoy the pristine greenery and have a great view of the Duomo.

Address: Piazza de' Pitti 1



view of Florence from Piazzale Michelangelo

18. Piazzale Michelangelo

Piazzale Michelangelo is one of [Florence's best viewpoints](#). You can see a postcard worthy view of the entire cityscape of Florence.

Like [Piazza della Signoria](#), the square has a monumental copy of Michelangelo's David, delivered by nine pairs of oxen in 1873.

Piazzale Michelangelo isn't ancient. In fact, it's a fairly recent addition, designed by Giuseppe Poggi. It was built in 1869 as part of the redevelopment of Florence.

In addition to the David, there are bronze copies of the four allegories from the Medici Chapel in San Lorenzo.



Piazzale Michelangelo, with a copy of Michelangelo's David

How do you get to the Piazza Michelangelo? Take bus #12 (from Boboli Gardens), bus #13 (from Ponte Niccolò), or the HopOn/Hop Off Bus. More effortlessly, you can just take a taxi. There's also a parking lot, if you have a car.

If you want to make the hike from downtown Florence, wear comfortable shoes. You can start after crossing the Ponte Vecchio.

There's a serpentine path from Piazza Poggi. Or you can follow the 2 kilometer Via Michelangelo from Piazza Ferruccio.



view of San Miniato al Monte from Fort Belvedere

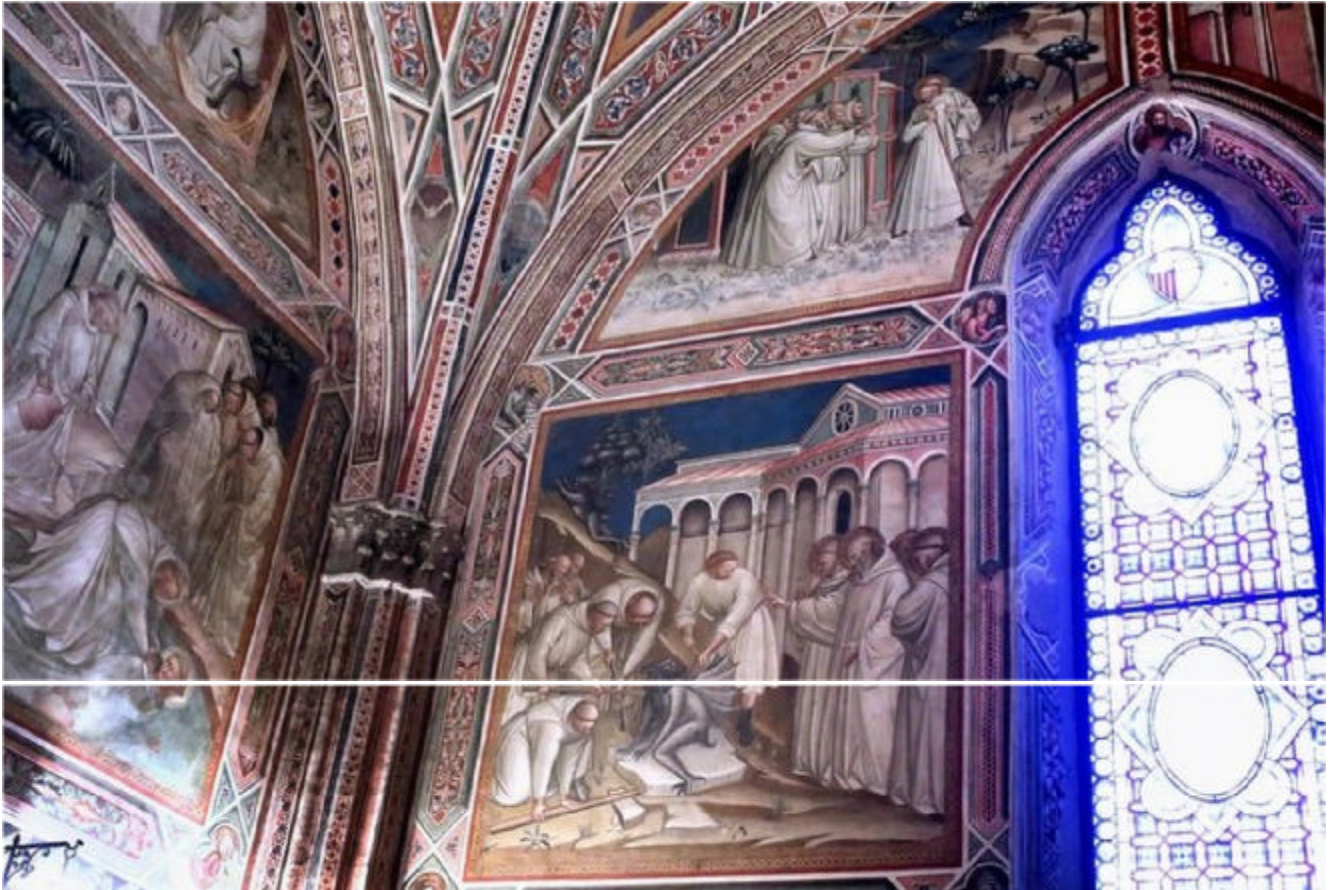
19. San Miniato al Monte Church

When you're done at the Piazzale Michelangelo, you should walk 5 minutes and visit the spectacular and well preserved [Church of San Miniato al Monte](#). It's Florence's crowning glory.

The church is perched even higher and with a better view. Building began in 1018. Like the Baptistery, the church is over 1000 years old.

The church takes its name from Minias, an Armenian prince who was Florence's first martyr. Legend holds that Minias picked up his decapitated head and flew over the Arno to the church site. San Miniato Church is dedicated to the saint.

The relics of Minias are often said to be buried in the church crypt, which features frescos by Taddeo Gaddi. But that's inaccurate. The bones were sold off to raise money for the church. So I'm not sure what's in the crypt besides chicken bones.



frescos in the church depicting the life of St. Benedict

San Miniato has Florence's emblematic white and green marble facade. It's a harmonious piece of Tuscan Romanesque architecture, a very unique building in Florence.

When you walk through the turquoise doors, you're greeted by a spectacular interior. Every inch of the church is covered in mosaics, gold leaf, or geometric patterns, with a spectacular mosaic decorating the half dome in the apse. The marble floor is decorated with zodiac signs.

The monks of San Miniato still sing Gregorian chants at Vespers, in a small chapel at the back of the church. Anyone can go and listen. They usually chant at 5:30 pm in the summer and 4:30 pm in the winter.

Address: Via delle Porte Sante 34



Fra Angelico, The Annunciation, 1439

20. Museum of the San Marco Monastery

San Marco Monastery is a must visit attraction in Florence if you love the early Renaissance. In 1437, Cosimo de Medici decided to rebuild a crumbling convent complex.

He hired the architect Michelozzo. The walls were decorated by Fra Angelico and his workshop. San Marco is now a haven of uplifting tranquility and home to some of Florence's best sacred art.

Fra Angelico was a devout monk. With Giotto and Donatello, he helped transform the art world and usher in the Renaissance.



facade of San Marco Monastery

Fra Angelico's humanistic pieces, with delicate palettes, led him to be dubbed the "Angelic Painter" or Il Beato «the Blessed». Giorgio Vasari described Fra Angelico as a "rare and perfect talent."

The highlight of the San Marco Museum is the Sala dell' Ospizio, where the most important Fra Angelico paintings are housed, including The Last Judgment, The Crucifixion and Saints, and The Annunciation «at the top of the stairs».

There are also seminal works by Ghirlandaio, Michelangelo's teacher, including a Last Supper fresco in the Refectory. Legend holds that the cherries arranged on the tablecloth spell out a rhyme.



You can also visit the plain room where the fanatical monk Savonarola, the scourge of the Medici, lived and worked.

Also stop in to peer at the simple cell where Cosimo de Medici came to meditate. It's decorated with Fra Angelico's Adoration of the Magi.

Address: Piazza San Marco 3



Masaccio frescos

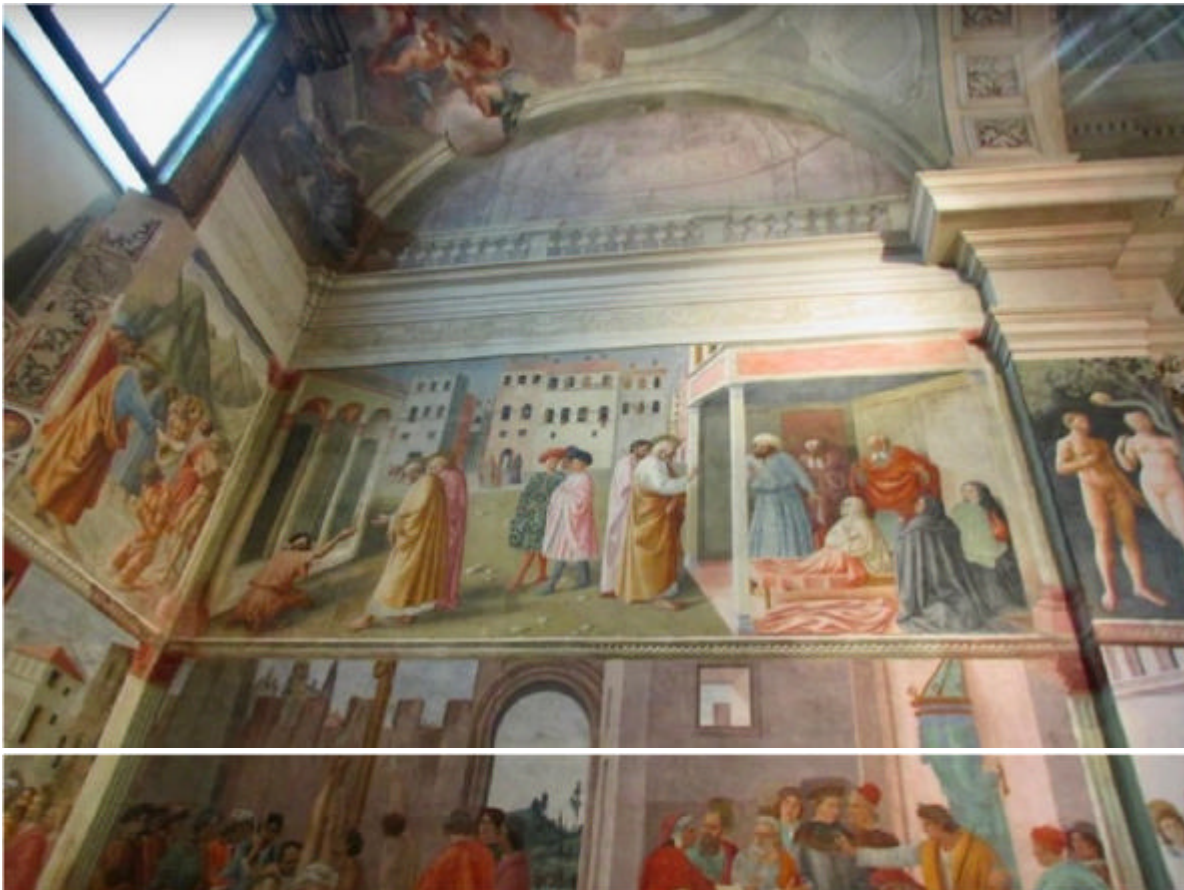
21. Brancacci Chapel in Santa Maria del Carmine

The Brancacci Chapel is another supreme example of early Renaissance painting. It's completely filled with frescos by Masaccio and his workshop.

It's considered one of the three important chapels of the Renaissance, along with the Giotto's [Scrovegni Chapel](#) in Padua and Michelangelo's [Sistine Chapel](#) in Rome.

As I mentioned earlier, Masaccio was an influential painter, despite dying mysteriously at just 27. He was one of the first painters in art history to experiment with single point perspective and three dimensional space.

A Medici enemy, Felice Brancacci, commissioned the fresco cycle in 1424. They were intended to represent the life of St. Peter, from original sin to the salvation of man. After Masaccio's death, the frescos were completed by Fillipino Lippi.



Masaccio frescos in the Brancacci Chapel

In the upper registry, there's one of Masaccio's greatest masterpieces, The Tribute Money. It's a story from the new Testament when Christ is confronted by a tax collector. Christ performs a miracle, causing money to appear in the mouth of a fish.

Just to the left of The Tribute Money is another Masaccio must see masterpiece, the Expulsion of Adam and Eve From Eden. An armed angel banishes the pariahs. Adam appears ashamed and Eve cries. It's an emotional painting.

Interestingly, Adam's private parts were painted over with fig leafs on the order of the ultra religious Cosimo in 1642, similar to [Michelangelo's Last Judgment in the Vatican Museums](#). During restoration, the figure of Christ was returned to the original nude.

Address: Piazza del Carmine 14



Santo Spirito Church

22. Basilica of Santo Spirito

This is Brunelleschi's second church in Florence. It's a [hidden gem in Florence](#), sitting in a shabby chic piazza in the Oltrarno district. If you're hungry, stop in at Gustapanino for a panini.

Built in 1440, the church is a pivotal work of the early Renaissance. Brunelleschi was one of the first architects to use perspective and geometry, breaking away from outdated medieval church styles.

Brunelleschi thought beauty resided in harmony and mathematical perfection. He was inspired by the classicism of ancient Rome, creating an unassuming exterior and a rather severe interior. Brunelleschi used a latin cross like a small t floorpan.



Crucifix attributed to Michelangelo, 1492

The main altar, an out of place Baroque affair, is at the center of the crossing square. Three sides of Santo Spirito have a continuous succession of 40 identical semi-circular chapels. The massive pietra forte Corinthian columns give the church a monumentality.

Santo Spirito houses a wooden crucifix attributed to Michelangelo. It was carved when he was only 17. Restored, it now hangs 22 meters high in the sacristy.

There are also some notable frescos in the Bini-Capponi Chapel. And art lovers will should inspect Domenico di Zanobi's Maddona of the Relief in the Velutti Chapel.

Address: Piazza Santa Spirito 30



Michelangelo's Triple Staircase in the Laurentian Library

23. Michelangelo's Laurentian Library

Commissioned by Pope Clement VII, the [Laurentian Library](#) is a revolutionary and blissfully uncrowded attraction in Florence. Construction began in 1524 and the library opened in 1571. It now functions as a museum, not a library.

The Laurentian Library consists of a reading room and a 48 foot vestibule built atop the San Lorenzo cloisters. It has one of the world's most important collections of manuscripts, which belonged to the Medici family.

In designing the library, Michelangelo broke away from classical tradition and rules of proportion. He designed a dream-like space with curves and unusual configurations.

You enter the library from the cloisters of the Basilica of San Lorenzo. ✨ You can purchase a combined ticket to visit both. ✨ The seemingly oversize Triple Staircase conveys a sense of movement.

It seems to pour forward like pools of liquid. It may be the first freestanding staircase in architectural history.



Wild structures surround the staircase. You almost don't see the walls. They're decorated with architectural elements such as extremely large low-hanging brackets.

Some of the elements are put into niches, making architecture the artwork. Columns are set into the wall or appear to rest on the corbels.

Unlike the vestibule, the Reading Room develops horizontally. There are two series of wooden benches, called plutei. There's a white and red terra cotta floor and a coffered ceiling.

Michelangelo's dramatic and inventive architectural style marked the beginning of Mannerism, a late Renaissance period that reinvented and put a stylized twist on classicism.

Address: Piazza San Lorenzo



walled garden in the Medici-Riccardi Palace

24. Chapel of the Magi | Capella dei Magi

The beautiful Chapel of the Magi is located in the [MediciRiccardi Palace](#). The palace itself is rather a brooding rusticated stone affair. But upstairs in the Piano Nobile is one of the [most beautiful chapels in Italy](#) — the Chapel of the Magi.

The chapel is accessed via a stairway from the courtyard. It's definitely one of the best things to do in Florence.

The Chapel of the Magi was a private chapel used exclusively for the Medici's prayer and devotion. The chapel is decorated with a beautiful series of frescos painted in 1459 by Benozzo Gozzoli.



Benozzo Gozzoli frescos in the Chapel of the Magi

Gozzoli was trained by Ghiberti and Fra Angelico. He thus developed a charming narrative style.

The frescos are in two parts, the Procession of the Magi on three walls in the main room and the Adoration of the Magi in the chancel. They've recently been restored to their full technicolor glory.

The frescos are meant to glorify the Medici family. It was a form of propaganda to show their wealth and greatness. Throughout the chapel, there's an abundance of purple porphyry and gold, just to underscore the point.



Gozzoli frescos in the Medici-Riccardi Palace

The Procession of the Magi covers three of the four chapel walls.

Each wall represents one of the three kings or magi arriving in Bethlehem to pay homage to the newborn king, bringing expensive gifts. Famous Medici appear in under the guise of the magi, equating themselves with immortality.

On the east wall, there's a portrait of Lorenzo the Magnificent at the age of 10 on a white horse. There's also a portrait of Giuliano, Lorenzo's brother who was assassinated in the Pazzi Conspiracy (more on that below).

Cosimo the Elder appears riding a donkey, a reference to Jesus himself. Is Cosimo trying to appear modest or as the second coming? It's delightfully unclear.

Address: Via Camillo Cavour 3



Casa Buonarroti

25. Casa Buonarroti

[Casa Buonarroti](#) is fantastic. It's one of the most underrated and overlooked [museums in Florence](#).

The museum was a property once owned by the famed Renaissance artist [Michelangelo](#), whose last name was Buonarroti. Later, the palace was transformed into a housemuseum by his heirs.

The museum was designed to celebrate the great artist's legacy. It's a visual, and somewhat romanticized, biography of his life. If you're a Michelangelo fan, Casa Buonarroti is a must visit attraction in Florence. Casa Buonarroti has two of Michelangelo's earliest known works of sculpture. It houses Michelangelo's majestic wooden model for the facade of the Basilica of San Lorenzo.

To top that, this tiny museum has the world's second most important collection of Michelangelo drawings.



mosaic of the Annunciation in Santissima Annunziata

26. Church of the Annunciation | Santissima Annunziata

[Santissima Annunziata](#) was rebuilt in 1444-81 by the famed Florentine architect [Michelozzo](#). It's considered his masterpiece. The church also houses some superb works of Florentine art.

Inside, the nave was begun by Michelangelo in 1444. It was completed in a different style by Leon Battista Alberti. After you enter, on the left, you'll see an elegant marble temple by Michelozzo. The temple was commissioned to hold the miraculous picture of the Annunciation.

The tale behind the painting goes like this. A 13th century monk, Fra Bartolomeo, fell asleep while painting an Annunciation. When he awoke, the monk found that angels had completed Mary's face. The miracle drew pilgrims to the church.

You'll find beautiful Andrea del Castagno's frescos, Redeemer and St. Julian and Trinity. Another chapel has a panel by Perugino, Ascension of Christ. The sculptor Giambologna's tomb is inside, adorned with frescoes, statues, and reliefs. And there's a beautiful painting by [Giorgio Vasari](#), Saint Luke Painting the Virgin.

In the cloister are the chapterhouse, several chapels, and the sacristy. The Votive Chapel boasts frescos by Andrea del Sarto, Cosimo Rosselli, Alesso Baldovinetti.



statues in the Bardini Gardens, another lovely spot

27. Bardini Gardens

The [Bardini Villa and Gardens](#) are situated between Costa San Giorgio and Borgo San Niccolo. They're close to the more famous Boboli Gardens of the Pitti Palace, but much less crowded.

Beginning in the 13th century, the gardens belonged to the Mozzi family. In the 20th century, famous art dealer Stefano Bardini purchased the villa, gardens, and the surrounding properties. The gardens officially opened to the public in 2005, after a massive restoration.

The Bardini Gardens contains 10 acres of woods, cypress trees, terrace gardens, and fruit orchards. It's the perfect serene environment to take a relaxing stroll or stop to read a book.

The most famous spot is the whimsical Wisteria Tunnel of purple flowers. If you go to the gardens in mid-April/May, the wisteria will be in peak bloom.

The best spot for views is from the Belvedere terrace, where you get a panoramic views of the Duomo, Santa Croce, and the nearby town of Fiesole (which is an easy [day trip from Florence](#)).



Wisteria Tunnel in the Bardini Gardens

If you have time, pop into the Villa Bardini. It houses the [Roberto Capucci Museum](#), which is essentially an archive of the Roman designer.

Address: Costa San Giorgio 2

23 Hidden Gems and Unusual Things To Do In Florence

Last Updated on July 6, 2022

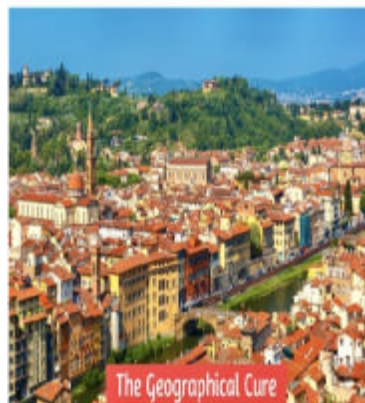
As the “Cradle of the Renaissance,” Florence is one of Europe’s most beautiful and busiest cities. More than 4 million visitors descend on Florence annually, lured by spectacular art and architecture.



the Wisteria Tunnel at the Bardini Gardens

If you’re only in Florence for a few days, you have to hit Florence’s must see sites — the Uffizi Gallery, the Duomo Complex, and Michelangelo’s David.

But what if you’re there for a longer time frame, a repeat visit, or you want to avoid the seemingly ever-present tourist siege in Florence?



If so, here's an epic list of 23 off the beaten path hidden gems in Florence. While not as well known, these less visited Florence attractions boast beautiful must see Renaissance art without the crowds and lines.

You can admire a groundbreaking painting, sculpture, or fresco without elbowing your neighbor or having your view obstructed.

If you want visit secret Florence, read on for the full scoop! You may also want to read up on the [Medici family](#), the dynasty that ruled Florence for centuries.



Gozzoli frescos in the Magi Chapel

Hidden Gems and Secret Spots in Florence Italy

Here are my picks for the 23 best hidden gems in Florence, for your bucket list.

1 Chapel of the Magi | Capella dei Magi

The Chapel of the Magi is located in the Medici-Riccardi Palace, the first of [three palaces that the Medici family lived in](#). The palace itself is rather a brooding rusticated stone affair.

But upstairs in the Piano Nobile hides one of the most precious hidden gems in Florence — the Chapel of the Magi. It's accessed via a stairway from the courtyard.



portrait of Lorenzo the Magnificent as a boy

The Chapel of the Magi was a private chapel used exclusively for the Medici's prayer and devotion. The chapel is decorated with a beautiful series of frescos painted in 1459 by Benozzo Gozzoli. Gozzoli was trained by Ghiberti and Fra Angelico, and thus developed a charming narrative style.

The frescos are in two parts, the Procession of the Magi on three walls in the main room and the Adoration of the Magi in the chancel. The frescos are meant to glorify the Medici family.

It was a form of propaganda to show their wealth and greatness. Throughout the chapel, there's an abundance of purple porphyry and gold, just to underscore the point.



altar with the Adoration of the Magi

The Procession of the Magi covers three of the four chapel walls.

Each wall represents one of the three kings or magi arriving in Bethlehem to pay homage to the newborn king, bringing expensive gifts.

Famous Medici appear in the guise of the magi, equating themselves with immortality.

On the east wall, there's a portrait of Lorenzo the Magnificent at the age of 10 on a white horse. There's also a portrait of Giuliano, Lorenzo's brother who was assassinated in the Pazzi Conspiracy.

Cosimo the Elder appears riding a donkey, a reference to Jesus himself. Is Cosimo trying to appear modest or as the second coming? It's delightfully unclear.

Address: Via Camillo Cavour 3



Piazza Santo Spirito in the now trendy Oltrarno district

2. Basilica of Santo Spirito

This is Brunelleschi's second church in Florence. It's a Florence hidden gem, sitting in a shabby chic piazza in the Oltrarno district. If you're hungry, stop in at Gustapanino for a panini.

Built in 1440, the church is a pivotal work of the early

Renaissance. Brunelleschi was one of the first architects to use perspective and geometry, breaking away from outdated medieval church styles.

Brunelleschi thought beauty resided in harmony and mathematical perfection. He was inspired by the classicism of ancient Rome, creating an unassuming exterior and a rather severe interior. Brunelleschi used a latin cross (like a small t) floorplan.



Michelangelo crucifix in the sacristy of Santo Spirito

The main altar, an out of place Baroque affair, is at the center of the crossing square. Three sides of Santo Spirito have a continuous succession of 40 identical semi-circular chapels. The massive pietra forte Corinthian columns give the church a monumentality.

Santo Spirito houses a wooden crucifix attributed to Michelangelo. It was carved when the artist was only 17.

Restored, it now hangs 22 meters high in the sacristy designed by Lorenzo the Magnificent's favorite architect Giuliano da Sangallo. For 3 euros, you can access the sacristy from the cloister and see the crucifix in the round.

There are also some notable frescos in the Bini-Capponi Chapel. And art lovers will should inspect Domenico di Zanobi's Maddona of the Relief in the Velutti Chapel.

Address: Piazza Santa Spirito 30



the Wisteria Tunnel at the Bardini Gardens

3. Bardini Gardens

The Bardini Gardens are situated between Costa San Giorgio and Borgo San Niccolò. They're close to the more famous Boboli Gardens of the [Pitti Palace](#), but much less crowded.

Beginning in the 13th century, the gardens belonged to the Mozzi family.

In the 20th century, famous art dealer Stefano Bardini purchased the villa, gardens, and the surrounding properties. The gardens officially opened to the public in 2005, after a massive restoration.

The Bardini Gardens contains four hectares of woods, cypress trees, gardens and fruit orchards. It's the perfect serene environment to take a relaxing stroll or stop to read a book.



antique Roman statues at Bardini Gardens

The most famous spot is the whimsical Wisteria Tunnel of purple flowers (show at the top). If you go to the gardens in mid-April/May, the wisteria will be in peak bloom.

The best spot for views is from the Belvedere terrace, where you get a panoramic view of the Florentine cityscape.

Address: Costa San Giorgio 2



the ornate tabernacle in Orsanmichele

4. Orsanmichele | San Michele in Orto

Designed by Francesco Talenti and others, Orsanmichele is a wonderful hidden gem in Florence. It's a well preserved and important 15th century Florentine church. It's eccentric looking. Orsanmichele rises up like a three story brown rectangle.

But it's a treasure trove of Renaissance sculpture — a sort of street view museum. Orsanmichele was originally Florence's central grain market. It was converted into a church in 1380.

Inside, the church has a spectacular bejeweled Gothic Tabernacle altar, with a painting of the Madonna della Grazie. Legend holds that those who prayed before her were granted miracles. The original painting was lost and replaced with a 1497 painting by Bernardo Daddi.

Orsanmichele is most noted for its incredible sculpture, decorating the exuberant Gothic facade. The facade has 14 niches, each one housing a statue of a patron saint commissioned by Florence's guilds.

Created by the best artists of the time, the exterior sculptures are now copies, with the monumental originals in the Orsanmichele Museum on the top floor of the church.



Donatello, St. Mark, 1411

By far, Orsanmichele's most famous sculpture is Donatello's St. Mark. It's the first truly Renaissance piece of art (sculpture was more advanced than painting). St. Mark marked a revival of classical themes and naturalism.

St. Mark was even given a receding hairline. Donatello's famous St. George was also once at Orsanmichele, but was moved to the Bargello Museum.

Orsanmichele also has three sculptures by Ghiberti — St. John the Baptist (the first significant Renaissance statue in bronze), St. Matthew (Ghiberti's most important sculpture), and St. Stephen. And also a famous sculpture by Andrea Verrocchio, Doubting Thomas.

Verrocchio was the teacher of [Leonardo da Vinci](#). Right now, the Orsanmichele Museum is only open on Monday morning from 10:00 am to 12:30 pm and Saturday from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm.



Stibbert Museum

5. Stibbert Museum and Garden

Perfect for history and military buffs, the Stibbert Museum is one of Florence's more unusual museums. It houses the private collection of eccentric art collector Frederick Stibbert.

When Stibbert inherited a fortune, he retired. Collecting art became his passion. Hard life, huh?

When Stibbert died, he gifted his villa to Florence. His museum is filled with an eclectic collection of artifacts, especially armory and weaponry, spread over 57 rooms. One of the most important pieces is the "pwit costume," made for the coronation of Napoleon as king of Italy in 1805.

Be sure to wander through the Medieval Room and the Hall of Knights. The latter has full scale replicas of horses and armory.

That room's only beat by the sheer number of samurai swords.



Egyptian Temple in the Stibbert Garden

The Stibbert Museum also has a beautiful garden. It's a romantic English style garden with quirky architectural elements, filled with caves, temples, and fountains. You could stop here as part of a day trip from Florence to nearby Fiesole.

There are two ponds with a variety of aquatic life. Apart from admiring the flora and fauna, there are two temples.

One is a Hellenistic temple. The other is an Egyptian Temple, built by Stibbert himself between 1862-64. Both temples recall the 19th century fashion for all things antiquity.

Address: Via Federico Stibbert 26



Hall of Paradise in the Duomo Museum

6. Duomo Museum | Opera del Duomo Museum

The newly renovated [Opera del Duomo Museum](#) is an absolute must visit attraction in Florence. Everyone visits the Duomo, but very few go inside the museum. That's a mistake because it's spectacular.

The Duomo Museum is housed in the Piazza del Duomo at the back of Giotto's Bell Tower, and offers a nice view of Brunelleschi's dome from its terrace.

The museum houses works that were removed from the Duomo complex or brought in from outside for conservation. With 750 pieces, it's the world's largest collection of monumental Florentine sculpture.

The first thing you see when you walk in the museum is the Hall of Paradise. The hall contains a magnificent reconstruction of a Duomo facade.

It was torn down in 1587 to make room for a Renaissance facade (that was never completed). The reconstructed facade has exact replicas of the sculptures that once adorned it.



Arnolfo de Cambio, Madonna of the Glass Eyes, 1300



Ghiberti's gorgeously restored Gates of Paradise, 1425-52

The other must see masterpieces in the Duomo Museum are Ghiberti's Gates of Paradise (the world's most famous doors), Michelangelo's unfinished Florence Pieta, and Donatello's compelling Penitent Magdalene.

One of Michelangelo's last masterpieces, the pieta is currently being restored behind glass walls.

You can visit the Duomo Museum with a [Brunelleschi ticket](#) to the Duomo complex. Click [here](#) for a guided tour of the magnificent Duomo Museum.

Address: Piazza del Duomo 9



Taddeo Gaddi, The Last Supper, 1360s

7. Opera Museum of Santa Croce Basilica

The Basilica of Santa Croce isn't exactly a hidden gem in Florence. The beautiful basilica has one of the world's greatest assemblages of frescos, painting, sculptures, and celebrity funeral tombs (including Michelangelo's).

But most people don't make it to Santa Croce's museum, the Museo dell'Opera di Santa Croce. Founded in 1900, the Santa Croce Museum is in the church's former Refectory. It houses works from the Florentine school.

In 1966, the space was damaged by catastrophic flooding of the Arno River. It was carefully restored, though some damage was irreversible. The museum reopened in 1975.

In the museum, you'll find many impressive frescos, sculptures, sketches, etc.



Taddeo Gaddi, The Last Supper and the Tree of Life, 1335

The must see masterpieces include Cimabue's Crucifix, Donatello's St. Louis of Toulouse, Taddeo Gaddi's The Last Supper and the Tree of Life, Bronzino's Christ's Descent into Limbo, and Francesco Salviati's Deposition from the Cross.

There's also a beautiful collection of terra-cotta tile by the Della Robbia School.

Click [here](#) if you want to pre-purchase a skip the line ticket. Click [here](#) to book a 1 hour guided tour of the magnificent church.

Address: Piazza di Santa Croce 16



the Hospital of the Innocents in the Piazza della Santissima Annunziata

8. Hospital of the Innocents

The Hospital of the Innocents is a museum dedicated to the first orphanage in Florence. This landmark building was designed by the famous architect Brunelleschi. You can book a [1.5 hour guided tour](#) to take it all in.

It was his very first project. His resurrection of a classical style would establish a foundation for Italian architecture for centuries.

The museum was recently renovated and modernized. The museum uses a lot of digital and multi-media equipment to relay the history of the orphanage.

The most moving part of the museum is the objects parents left behind with their child, such as a broken locket. The objects were meant to be proof of parentage once the parent and child were reunited.

But sometimes the parent never returned. The objects are a bleak reminder of the child's dire situation.



Gallery of the Ospedale degli Innocenti

The building's facade is covered with a nine bay loggia, and is slightly elevated with a staircase. There are concave circular frames set within spandrels between the loggias.

Four decades after Brunelleschi's death, the ten "bambini" of Della Robbia — glazed relief sculptures of babies wearing swaddling clothes — were added. Nine triangular topped windows sit above the arches.

Inside you'll find a women's courtyard and a mens courtyard. The refectory, cloisters, dormitories, infirmary, and porticoes were purposely balanced by Brunelleschi to create a harmonious and rational hospital architecture.

Later, the rooms were enlarged and decorated with frescoes. The frescoes depict the activities of the institution and the favors granted by the [Medici dynasty](#).



Mars holds the Medici coat of arms by Bernardino Poccetti



Botticelli, Madonna and Child With an Angel, 1465-67

The Hospital of the Innocents also has a fine art collection. It's on the top floor gallery. There, you'll find works by Fra Angelico, Botticelli, Ghirlandaio, Giambologna, and Della Robbia.

Probably the most famous painting is Ghirlandaio's Adoration of the Magi.

Don't miss the Madonna with Child attributed to a young Botticelli, who was obviously still under the influence of his brilliant master Filippo Lippi (whose quite similar Madonna and Child is in the [Uffizi Gallery](#)).

Address: Piazza della Santissima Annunziata 13



Basilica of San Miniato al Monte

9. Basilica of San Miniato al Monte

Most people head to Piazzale Michelangelo for the best views of Florence. But if you're willing to hike a little higher, maybe 5 more minutes, you'll find one of Florence's most beautiful and best preserved ancient churches, the [Basilica of San Miniato al Monte](#).

The basilica is Florence's crowning glory, with even better views. Building began in 1018. Like the Baptistry, the church is over 1000 years old.

The church takes its name from Minias, an Armenian prince who was Florence's first martyr. Legend holds that Minias picked up his decapitated head and flew over the Arno to the church site. San Miniato Church is dedicated to the saint.

The relics of Minias are often said to be buried in the church crypt, which features frescos by Taddeo Gaddi. But that's inaccurate. The bones were sold off to raise money for the church. So I'm not sure what's in the crypt besides chicken bones.



frescos in the church depicting the life of St. Benedict

San Miniato has Florence's emblematic white and green marble facade. It's a harmonious piece of Tuscan Romanesque architecture, a very unique building in Florence.

When you walk through the turquoise doors, you're greeted by a spectacular interior. Every inch of the church is covered in mosaics, gold leaf, or geometric patterns, with a spectacular mosaic decorating the half dome in the apse. The marble floor is decorated with zodiac signs.

The monks of San Miniato still sing Gregorian chants at Vespers, in a small chapel at the back of the church. Anyone can go and listen. They usually chant at 5:30 pm in the summer and 4:30 pm in the winter.

Address: Via delle Porte Sante 34



staircase in the Michelangelo-designed Laurentian Library

10. Michelangelo's Laurentian Library

Commissioned by Pope Clement VII, the Laurentian Library is a revolutionary and blissfully uncrowded masterpiece.

Construction began in 1524 and the library opened in 1571. It now functions as a museum, not a library. It's part of the [Basilica of San Lorenzo complex](#).

The Laurentian Library consists of a reading room and a 48 foot vestibule built atop the San Lorenzo cloisters. It has one of the world's most important collections of manuscripts, which belonged to the Medici family.

In designing the library, Michelangelo broke away from classical tradition and rules of proportion. He designed a dream-like space with curves and unusual configurations.

The seemingly oversize Triple Staircase conveys a sense of movement. It seems to pour forward like pools of liquid. It may be the first freestanding staircase in architectural history.



Reading Room of the Laurentian Library

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Some of the elements are put into niches, making architecture the artwork. Columns are set into the wall or appear to rest on the corbels.

Unlike the vestibule, the Reading Room develops horizontally. There are two series of wooden benches, called plutei. There's a white and red terra cotta floor and a coffered ceiling.

Michelangelo's dramatic and inventive architectural style marked the beginning of Mannerism, a late Renaissance period that reinvented and put a stylized twist on classicism.

Address: Piazza San Lorenzo 9, entrance is to the left of San Lorenzo



Cloister of the Scalzo with Andrea del Sarto frescos

11. The Chiostro dello Scalzo

The little known [Cloister of the Scalzo](#) is a meditative space in Florence just around the corner from San Marco Monastery. It's a blissfully empty space without the cacophony of crowds at Florence's usual hotspots.

This small hidden gem isn't always open, so check the website for official hours. But it is always free.

The cloister itself was designed by celebrated architect Giuliano da Sangallo. Amid the elegant architecture are the beautiful frescos painted by High Renaissance and Mannerist painter Andrea del Sarto — known as the “faultless painter” —and his friend and fellow painter Fraciabigio.

Michelangelo was a del Sarto fanboy and del Sarto went on to teach [Giorgio Vasari](#).

The frescoes are in monochromatic pigments, called the grisaille, style, which focuses the viewer's attention on the beautiful drawing techniques employed. They depict twelve scenes from the life of St. John the Baptist and the four allegories of Charity, Hope, Justice and Faith.

The frescos were painted at various times from 1509-1526. Del Sarto's style is marked by a sophisticated informality and natural expression of emotion.

Address: Via Cavour 69



Bust of Dante Alighieri at Dante's Museum

12. Casa di Dante | Dante's House

The Casa di Dante is supposed to be an exact replica of the house Dante lived in in Florence. Dante Alighieri is Italy's famed 13th century poet. He's the author of the acclaimed The Divine Comedy.

In this epic poem, Dante creates a fictional version of himself, traveling through hell, purgatory, and paradise. His image driven descriptions were hugely influential, producing a plethora of visual art.

Dante famously fell in love with Beatrice Portinari, writing about her as an idealized love in his Vita Nuova. But it was an unrequited love.



Dante Alighieri's Divine Comedy, Inferno, Purgatorio and Paradiso

Dante admired her from afar. His passion became the subject of many paintings by Pre-Raphaelite artists, especially Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

If you have an abiding fascination with the great 13th century poet, you'll probably be interested in the displays. There are many copies of The Divine Comedy. Nearby is the church where Beatrice attended mass. Click [here](#) to book a Dante-Inferno tour that includes Dante's House.

Address: Via Santa Margherita 1



the Arezzo Chimera from the 4th century B.C.

13. Archaeological Museum

If you need a break from Renaissance art, head to Florence's [Archaeological Museum](#), housed in the Palazzo della Crocetta. It has an important archaeological collection, with a focus on the Etruscan period.

The museum's most famous piece is the Arezzo Chimera, a bronze hybrid figure of a mythical lion-goat-serpent. The piece is truly ancient, dating back to the 4th century B.C. But it wasn't discovered until the 16th century, pulled out of the earth in Arezzo in 1553.

When it was discovered, Cosimo I, who had a collector's taste for Etruscan art, recognized its value. He had architect and artist [Giorgio Vasari](#) authenticate it.

The sculptor and goldsmith Benvenuto Cellini (whose Perseus graces the Loggia dei Lanzi) cleaned and restored the piece. Cosimo kept the chimera in his personal collection at the [Palazzo Vecchio](#).

On the top floor is another intriguing bronze, Idolino. The museum also has a vast collection of pottery, funerary urns, and gem stones.

Address: Piazza Santissima Annunziata 9b



fresco in the Buonomini di San Martino

14. Buonomini di San Martino

This 700 year old church is an important medieval complex. The church, which can be visited for free, was the home of the Confraternity of the Buonomini di San Martino.

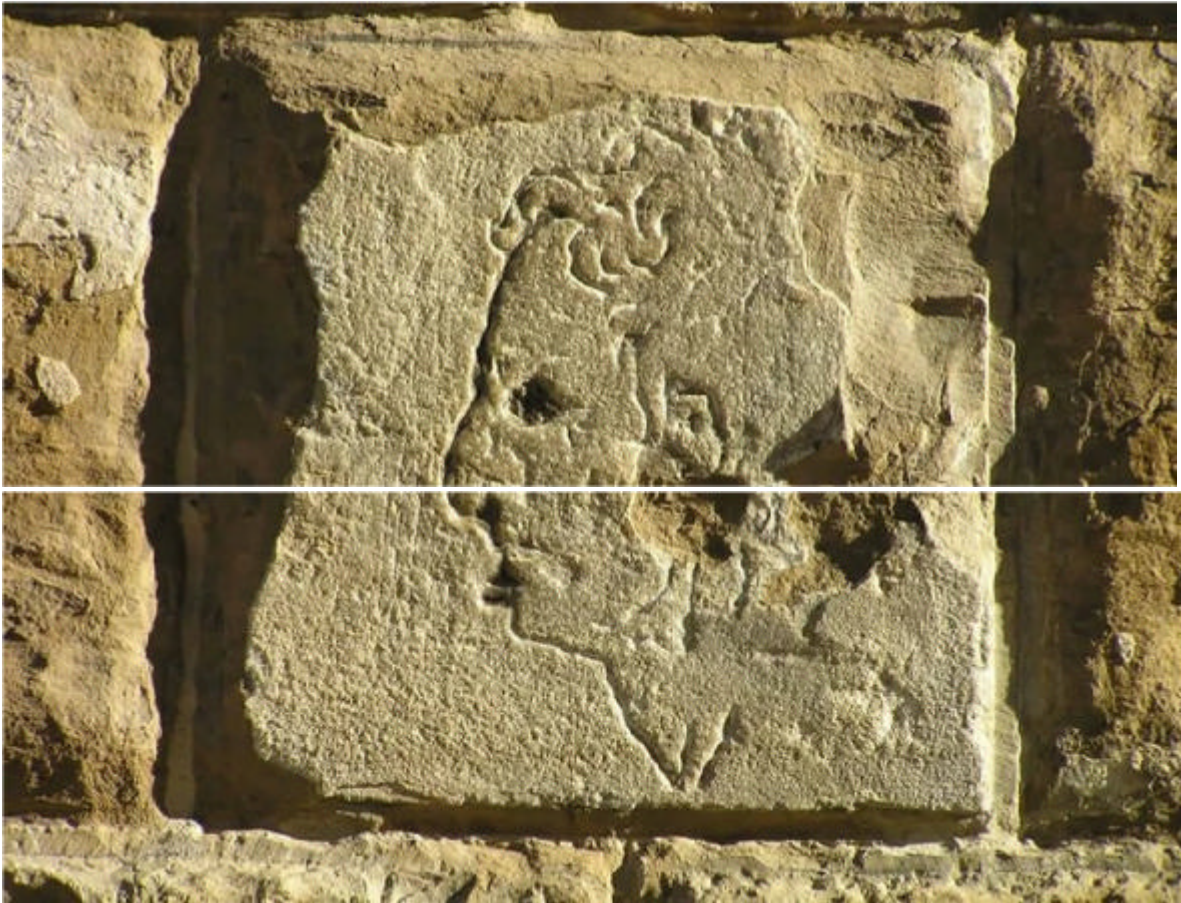
Buonomini literally translates as “good men.” A confraternity was an association of lay people who gathered together to pray and do charitable works.

Saint Martin of Tours is the saint most often associated with charity. Legend holds that he divided his cloak in two to share it with a beggar.

In the Buonomini’s oratory, the saint is represented in 2 frescoed lunettes, while 8 other lunettes represent the various works and good deeds of the charitable Buonomini men.

The lunettes were painted by an unknown artist in the school of Ghirlandaio in the early 1480s. They are similar style to the frescoes in the high chapel of Santa Maria Novella.

Address: Piazza San Martino ↙ off via Dante Alighieri ↘



L'importuno di Michelangelo, a carving on the Palazzo Vecchio

15. L'importuno di Michelangelo

The L'importuno is a little piece of street art attributed to Michelangelo. It's a graffiti-like carving etched into a single stone of the Palazzo Vecchio, near the Uffizi Gallery. It's a simple almost caricature-y outline of a man's face.

It's unclear why Michelangelo may have carved the piece. One story holds that it's the face of a man who bored Michelangelo in conversation on a daily basis.

Another legend holds that it's the face of a condemned prisoner executed in the Piazza della Signoria. Some even claim that Michelangelo carved it with his knife hidden behind his back.

In any event, it's just proof that graffiti has been around since ancient times.

Address: Piazza della Signoria



monumental Cemetery of the “Porte Sante” next to San Miniato al Monte

16. Delle Porte Sante Cemetery | Sacred Doors Cemetery

If you're looking for some crowd free views of Florence, instead of Piazzale Michelangelo head uphill to the Sacred Doors

Cemetery. It's right behind the Church of San Miniato al Monte.

This ancient graveyard is an open air museum, stuffed with beautiful funeral art and memorials.

The private temples and tombs are in varying architectural styles, from Renaissance to Art Deco. Many of them are inspired by Florence's churches.

The most famous effigy (show above) depicts the Mazzone siblings dancing together, fully united in the after life.



view from the Delle Porte Sante Cemetery



Buontalenti Grotto in the Boboli Gardens

17. Buontalenti Grotto in the Boboli Gardens

The Buontalenti Grotto, also known as the Grotto Grande, is a fascinating but often overlooked spot in the Boboli Gardens of the Pitti Palace. In 16th century Tuscany, it was the fashion to build decorative grottos reconstructing natural caves.

The title Buontalenti refers to the architect who designed this fantastical creation for Francesco I de' Medici.

On the sides of the pillared entrance are two niches with sculptures of Ceres and Apollo. They were sculpted by late Renaissance artist Baccio Bandinelli.



the Buontalenti Cave

The fancy facade is overlaid with architectural elements that look like stalagmites. On the tympanum at the top, the Medici coat of arms is held by two mosaic figures symbolizing Peace and Justice.

Inside, the walls are lavishly decorated with fake stalactites, stalagmites, sponges, and shells, carved by Pietro Matti. One room has a hole, which was once a pond. The other two rooms have frescos and a fountain. A ceiling resembles a sky with flying birds.

Address: Piazza de' Pitti 1



Palazzo Vecchio and the Tower of Arnolfo

18. Tower of Arnolfo

Want a great view of Florence without the queues and crowds? Instead of climbing Brunelleschi's dome or Giotto's Bell Tower, head to Palazzo Vecchio and climb the Tower of Arnolfo.

If you're up for a climb of 418 steps, the Tower of Arnolfo offers panoramic 360 views of the Duomo and Florence.

You enter via the Museum of the [Palazzo Vecchio](#), with a combined [ticket for Palazzo Vecchio](#) or for an additional small fee.

On your hike up, you'll pass a prison cell known as the "Little Hotel." This is where Cosimo the Elder and Savonarola were briefly imprisoned.



view of the Duomo from the Tower of Arnolfo

No more than 35 people can enter at once. On busy days, you'll be limited to 30 minutes. In bad weather, it's closed.

Address: Piazza della Signoria



facade of the San Marco Monastery Museum

19. Museum of San Marco Monastery

If you want to see great art without the crowds, [San Marco Monastery Museum](#) is a perfect alternative to the [Uffizi Gallery](#) or the [Accademia](#).

In 1437, Cosimo de Medici decided to rebuild a crumbling convent complex.

He hired the architect Michelozzo. The walls were decorated by Fra Angelico and his workshop. San Marco is now a haven of uplifting tranquility and home to some of Florence's best sacred art.

Fra Angelico was a devout monk. With Giotto and Donatello, he helped transform the art world and usher in the Renaissance.



Domenico Ghirlandaio, The Last Supper, 1486

His humanistic pieces, with delicate palettes, led him to be dubbed the “Angelic Painter” or “Il Beato” (the Blessed). Giorgio Vasari described Fra Angelico as a “rare and perfect talent.”

The highlight of the San Marco Museum is the Sala dell' Ospizio, where the most important Fra Angelico paintings are housed, including The Last Judgment, The Crucifixion and Saints, and The Annunciation (at the top of the stairs).

There are also seminal works by Ghirlandaio, Michelangelo's teacher, including a Last Supper fresco in the Refectory. Legend holds that the cherries arranged on the tablecloth spell out a rhyme.



Fra Angelico, The Annunciation, 1439

You can also visit the plain room where the fanatical monk Savonarola, the scourge of the Medici, lived and worked.

Also stop in to peer at the simple cell where Cosimo the Elder came to meditate. It's decorated with Fra Angelico's Adoration of the Magi.

Address: Piazza San Marco 3



Santa Maria Novella Pharmacy

20. Santa Maria Novella Pharmacy

While there's a fee to enter the beautiful [Basilica of Santa Maria Novella](#), you can visit the ancient pharmacy in a chapel right next door. Founded in 1221, its official name is the Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella.

It's the world's oldest apothecary still in operation. And it's housed in a stunning building with vaulted ceilings, frescos, and ornate gilding and stucco.

In this ancient place, Dominican monks once slaved over herbal remedies and potions in the 13th century. They doused themselves in blended vinegar to protect them from the plague.

In the 16th century, Catherine de' Medici brought the pharmacy's perfume, Eau de la Reine, to her French court.

Today, the pharmacy is a luxury store discreetly hawking beauty products with a cult following. Its products are handmade using Old World techniques. There's also a small museum where you can view antique pharmaceutical instruments and pottery.

Address: Via della Scala 16



Ghirlandaio, The Last Supper, 1480

21. Church and Museum of Saint Salvatore of Ognissanti

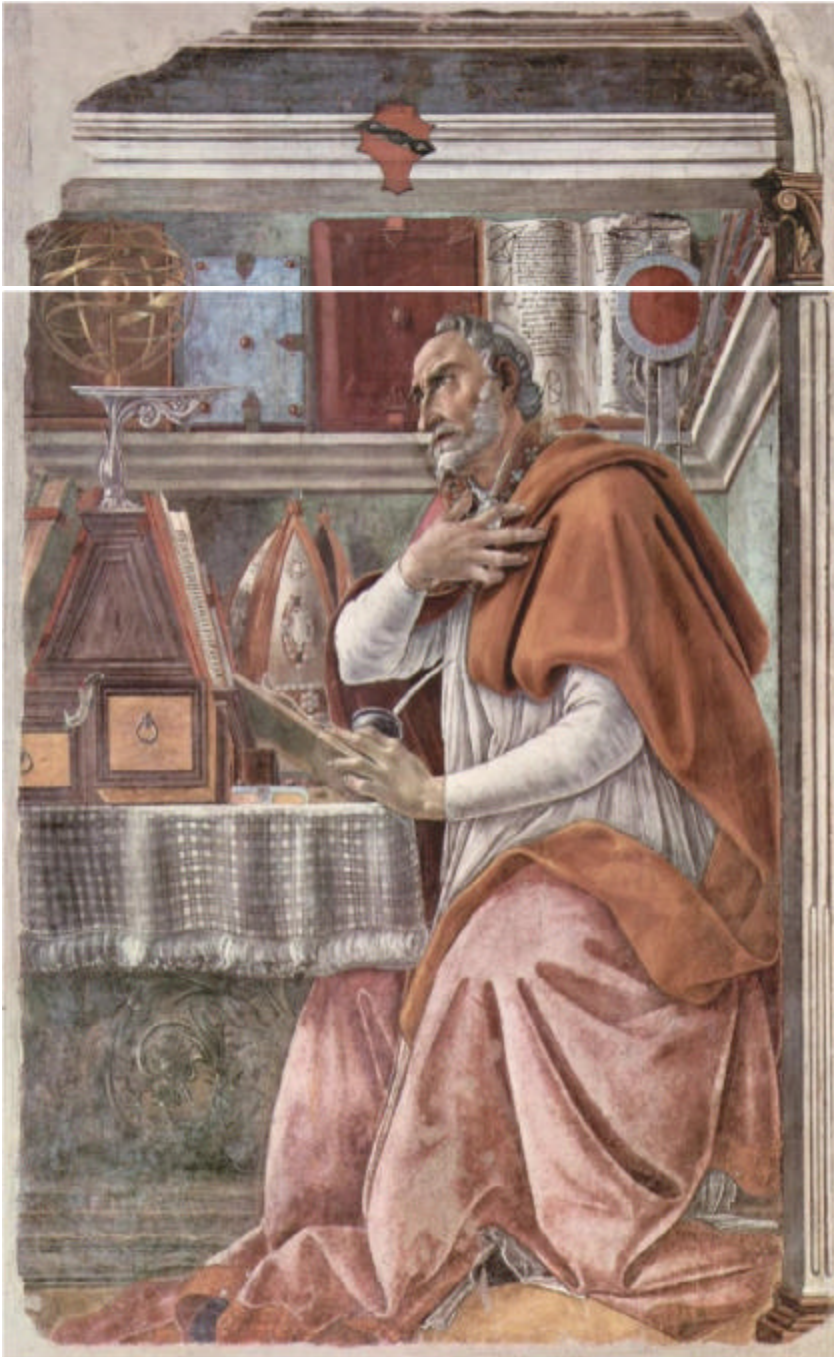
Near the Arno River is one of the most fabulous [churches in Florence](#) —Ognissanti.

The church and the convent were decorated by the greatest Early Renaissance masters of the times: Giotto, Botticelli, and Ghirlandaio. But because Ognissanti is off center, it doesn't get many visitors.

The church was built in the 13th century. But it was completely remodeled in the 17th century in a Baroque style. Botticelli is buried here, along with his muse, Simonetta Vespucci.

There is some top notch art work for viewing in the church. The church originally held Giotto's famous Ognissanti Madonna and Child Enthroned. But that painting was moved to the [Uffizi Gallery](#).

You can still find Botticelli's beautiful St. Augustine in His Study and Ghirlandaio's St. Jerome and His Study, Madonna della Misericordia, and Lamentation.



Botticelli, Saint Augustin in His Study, 1480

Founded in 1251, Ognissanti was part of a monastery that, initially, was open to men and women.

The monastery was devoted to evangelical perfection, modesty, and manual labor. During Cosimo I's reign, Franciscans took over the monastery in the 16th century.

The monastery was permanently closed in 1866. Today, it's a museum. You can visit the cloisters, the chapter house, and the refectory.

The museum's claim to fame is Ghirlandaio's fresco of The Last Supper on the back wall of the refectory. You can only see it for four hours (9:00 am to 1:00 pm) on Mondays and Saturdays

Address: Borgo Ognissanti 42



unusual hexagonal bell tower of the Church of Badia Fiorentina

22. Badia Fiorentina

The [Badia Fiorentina](#), or Florentine Abbey, is right near the [Bargello Museum](#). Its presence is marked by a distinctive hexagonal bell tower, which is a prominent feature in Florence's skyline.

Dante supposedly grew up across the street in what is now called the Casa Dante.

The abbey was founded in 978. In the 1280s, the abbey was rebuilt by Arnolfo di Cambio. The church was renovated in 1627 in a Baroque style.

The main thing to see in Badia Fiorentina is Filippo's Lippi's Apparition of the Virgin art to St. Bernard. Then, head down the stairs to the Cloister of the Oranges. Along with fruit trees, you'll see some gorgeous frescos.

Address: Via del Proconsolo



Church of San Salvi

23. Church of San Salvi

The Chiesa San Salvi is located just outside the historic center of Florence. It's a Vallombrosian church constructed in the 11th century.

The church is now a place of worship for Roman Catholics. The portico on the facade was added in the 16th century.

This hidden gem in Florence houses Andrea del Sarto's masterpiece, *The Last Supper*.

Art historian [Giorgio Vasari](#) described the painting as an "Endless majesty with its absolute grace of all the painted figures." Experts rank del Sarto's *The Last Supper* second only to [Leonardo's The Last Supper](#).

Del Sarto was a painter in the High Renaissance who was instrumental in the development of the Early Mannerism period. This painting shows Del Sarto at his artistic maturity, with perfect composition and vivid expressive color.



Andrea del Sarto, The Last Supper, 1525

I hope you've enjoyed my guide to the hidden gems of Florence. You may enjoy these other Florence travel guides and resources:

[Guide to the Uffizi Gallery](#)

[Best Museums in Florence](#)

[How To See Michelangelo's David](#)

[Guide to the Duomo Museum](#)

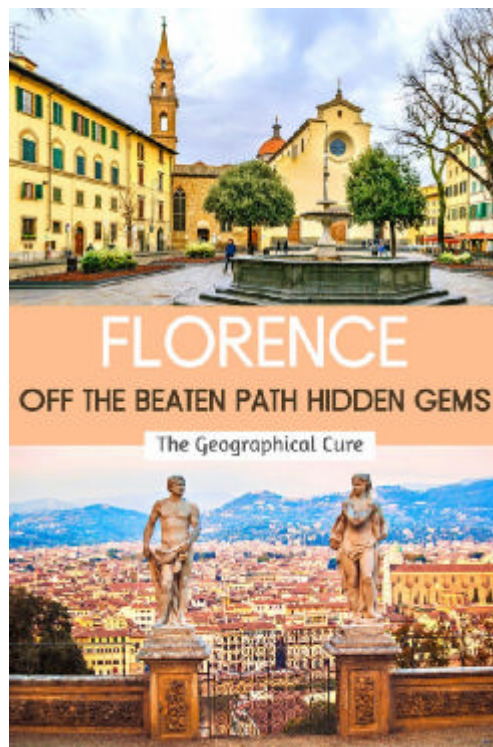
[Guide to San Lorenzo and the Medici Chapel](#)

[Guide to the Basilica of Santa Croce](#)

[Guide to the Palazzo Vecchio](#)

[How To Climb Brunelleschi's Dome](#)

[Guide to the Medici Palaces](#)



<https://www.thegeographicalcure.com/post/hidden-gems-in-florence>



Fun Things to Do in Florence, Italy

Despite the relatively small size of the Cradle of the Renaissance, there are a ridiculous number of fun things to do in Florence—which is a big part of why we love it.

Florence is one of our favorite cities in the entire world, and no matter how many times we go back, we will always plan to return.

The delicious food, accessible day trips, beautiful architecture, fascinating history, and the endless number of things to do in Florence all work together to leave us permanently enthralled with the city.

Trying to decide what to do in Florence for your upcoming trip? We've put together this Florence bucket list just for that!

Because this list got so long, I went ahead and divided things into categories to make it easier to find what you're looking for: whether that's an epic food experience, the perfect view of Florence, the quirkiest museum in town, or something else entirely, you'll find it here!



Overwhelmed By 75 Things to Do in Florence?

I don't blame you—as interesting as it is to dive into all the available fun things to do in Florence during a long trip or over a series of return visits, if this is your first trip to the city, you're probably wondering where to start.

The short version: make sure to see the Piazza del Duomo, the Piazza della Repubblica, Mercate Centrale, the Piazza Signoria, the Uffizi Gallery or the Galleria dell'Accademia (or both, depending on time), and the Ponte Vecchio.

Make sure to choose at least one epic Florence viewpoint to experience, too! The cupola at the Duomo is most popular (but requires advance planning), Piazzale Michelangelo is also popular and has the benefit of being free, and the Palazzo Vecchio is one of our personal favorites.

75 Fun Things to Do in Florence

Incredible Viewpoints in Florence

Climb Giotto's Bell Tower.

Florence's famous Duomo has two options for climbing if you're looking for an incredible view over Florence, and the less-touristed option is our personal preference.

Climbing Giotto's Bell Tower ensures that not only you get an amazing view of Florence itself, you also get a close-up view of the famous cupola—it's hard to admire the iconic structure when you're standing on it!

As a bonus, you don't need to book tickets for the bell tower days in advance the way you do for the cupola.



Climb the cupola (aka Brunelleschi's Dome).

If you're looking for the most iconic viewpoint in Florence, this is it: a masterpiece of Filippo Brunelleschi, Florence's cupola has been reaching high above the city since 1436 and was completed in only 16 years once Brunelleschi took over (the cathedral had been incomplete for 80 years beforehand).

The cupola is considered a feat of engineering even today, and is the third largest dome in the world, beaten out only by St. Peter's Basilica in Rome and St. Paul's Cathedral in London.

The climb up the cupola will take you up inside the dome, giving you a chance to view the impressive interior murals close-up before reaching the exterior of the dome.

If you want to complete the climb, this is what you need to know: purchase tickets days in advance (maybe even a week or more in the summer high season), as it is almost always sold out. Know that the climb can be a struggle for those who are scared of heights and that the climb itself is a bit intense—all 463 steps of it!



Admire the view from the Piazzale Michelangelo.

The Piazzale Michelangelo is both free and home to one of the most beautiful views over Florence.

Head here on a clear afternoon to get a great view of the Arno River, several of Florence's bridges (including the Ponte Vecchio), the Duomo, the Palazzo Vecchio, and more—all in one overarching view!

This is the perfect spot to watch the sunset over the city as it is free to enter and you can stay as long as you like, consider spending an evening in Florence watching the sun go down from up above.



Check out the view from the top of the Palazzo Vecchio.

Most viewpoints in Florence feature the Palazzo Vecchio, with its tower stretching into the sky, as a prominent landmark... but don't forget that you can climb the tower itself!

Boasting excellent views of the Duomo, climbing the Palazzo Vecchio is a fabulous, and less touristed, view of Florence—and it happens to be one of our personal favorites!

Visit San Miniato al Monte.

High in the hills—higher even than the popular Piazzale Michelangelo—sits the thousand-year-old San Miniato al Monte church.

On top of the church's beautiful interior and classic Tuscan exterior, the view of Florence from the front of San Miniato al Monte is incredible!

You can hike up to the viewpoint, but we visited by way of vintage Vespa!



Hike to Fiesole.

Up for a bit of a hike?

The town of Fiesole, high above Florence, is about a 1.5-2 hour hike from the center of the city.

Make the climb on a clear day for a chance to get some incredible views of Florence while also checking out another corner of Tuscany!

Head to the top of the Tower of San Niccolo.

The Tower of San Niccolo is a bit harder to access than many of these viewpoints: open only on certain summer afternoons from June to September, its limited hours are worth working around if you happen to be in Florence at the right time of year—the sweeping views of Florence are supposed to be magical.



Admire the view from the Rose Garden.

The smell of the rose garden during spring is intoxicating: roses spill out from every corner and along each walkway in this beautiful garden, and they make the perfect companion to admire one of the prettiest views in Florence.

Set just below the Piazzale Michelangelo, this garden is easy to visit on your way up or down to the Piazzale.

Though it is open year-round, the Rose Garden is at its best during May and June, when the roses are blooming.



Stare out over Tuscany near the Porcelain Museum.

Tucked into the back of the Boboli Gardens sits the Porcelain Museum, and it is a must-see on any list of things to do in Florence.

Not for the museum itself—it's small and worth a peek into, but not unforgettable—but for the gorgeous views of the Tuscan countryside that are available from the small garden in front of the museum.

From this vantage point, it's hard to remember that the hustle and bustle of Florence are so close behind you—from here, it's all about rolling hills and country villas, as far as the eye can see.



Admire the Ponte Vecchio without the crowds near the entrance to Hotel Lungarno.

We originally found this viewpoint through the guide on a food tour we took in Florence, and we've returned a couple of times since.

On the Otranto side of the river, there is a small walkway between two buildings along the Arno River (one of which is the Hotel Lungarno) that dead-ends into an epic view of the Ponte Vecchio.

It must be an absolute dream for the guests of the hotel to wake up to that view! If you feel like really, *really* splurging while in Florence, you can even [try it out for yourself](#).

Luckily, though, the view is also excellent from the outside... and that one is free.



Fascinating Museums in Florence

Visit the Uffizi Gallery.

One of the most famous things to do in Florence, the epic Uffizi Gallery hosts works by Renaissance legends like Da Vinci, Vasari, and Botticelli—you'll need at least two hours to give this art gallery its due!

This is one thing in Florence that we absolutely recommend purchasing tickets in advance for: lines are extremely long and can eat into your precious time in the gallery or the rest of Florence.



Go to La Specola (the Zoological & Anatomical Museum).

As the oldest scientific museum in Europe, you know this museum is just *bound* to be cool.

Best known for its 18th-century collection of wax anatomical models, La Specola is also home to various scientific instruments dating back several centuries, many taxidermied animals (including a hippopotamus that once lived in the Boboli Gardens as a pet of the Medici Family, who apparently had wildly bizarre taste in pets), and a wealth of knowledge on Italian contributions to science throughout the years.

Say hello to David at the Galleria dell'Accademia.

Unlike the large Uffizi Gallery, the Galleria dell'Accademia is much smaller and essentially exists to show off one piece of artwork: Michelangelo's magnificent *David* in all his glory, housed in a room built especially for the statue!

There is not much else to see in the gallery, so you won't need a terribly long time here, but be sure to check out some of Michelangelo's unfinished statues that are in the museum, a room stuffed to the brim with plaster molds of what later became beautiful marble statues, and a small series of rooms featuring gorgeous musical instruments!



See incredible sculpture at the Bargello National Museum.

Want to visit an elaborate art museum that once served as a prison?

That's what you'll find at the Bargello National Museum—as one of the oldest buildings in Florence, it has quite the history!

Today, you'll find some truly impressive works of art in the museum, which is focused on sculpture.

Check out the Stibbert Museum.

The Stibbert Museum has a bit of a different origin story than many museums in Florence: in the 19th century, the wealthy Frederick Stibbert dedicated his life to acquiring interesting objects, amassing an incredibly large private collection by the time of his death in the early 20th century.

At the time of his death, the collection was given to the city of Florence, who opened a museum in Stibbert's former home to the public to showcase the collection.

If you're interested in historical armor, this is a must on your things to do in Florence list: most notably, the museum holds around 16,000 pieces of armor from locations that span the globe and times dating from the 15th to the 19th century.



Pay a visit to the offbeat Museo Opificio delle Pietre Dure.

One of the more unique museums in Florence, the small Museo Opificio delle Pietre Dure is home to some impressive stone inlay work and mosaics, primarily working with semi-precious stones.

Closely connected to the art workshop that bears the same name, this is a great place to get a taste of traditional Florentine artistic practices.

Visit the Laurentian Library.

A library built partially by Michelangelo: you just know that has to be worth a visit, right?

Though Michelangelo left Florence before the project was completed, he was nonetheless involved from start to finish through instructions and letters to those who took over—and the result is a beautiful library, originally commissioned by the omnipresent Medici family, that still stands today.



Check out the Palazzo Strozzi Museum.

Though it is home to a permanent exhibit discussing the history of the Palazzo Strozzi, the Palazzo Strozzi Museum is one that you're going to want to check on before visiting: it typically hosts three rotating art exhibits throughout any given year.

Frequently emphasizing modern and international art, a visit to the Palazzo Strozzi might be the answer for you if you're an art lover looking for a little artistic variety in a city dominated by the Renaissance.

Duck into the Porcelain Museum.

Small but pretty, the porcelain museum is worth adding to your list of things to do in Florence if you're already going to be visiting the Boboli Gardens—the museum is contained within the gardens, and doesn't have an additional entrance fee beyond entering the gardens themselves.



Check out the Galileo Museum.

Also known as the Museum of the History of Science, the Galileo is a must-see in Florence for anyone interested in science as a whole.

Pay a visit to the Gucci Museum.

Have an interest in high fashion? Consider adding the Gucci Museum to your list of fun things to do in Florence!

This museum traces the history of the Gucci label and is complete with vintage Gucci clothes from throughout the decades.

Located right next to the Piazza Signoria, if you've ever visited Florence before, you've probably walked right by this tiny museum.

Marvel at the interior of the Palazzo Pitti.

Today, a large part of the Palazzo Pitti (lived in for centuries by the prominent Medici family) is taken up by the Palatine Gallery.

Part art gallery and part historical museum, the Palazzo Pitti's stunning interior is absolutely worth a look while in Florence.

Temporary exhibits, from modern art to fashion and beyond, often also pop up at the Palazzo Pitti.

The famous Boboli Gardens, which were historically part of the Palazzo Pitti estate, are located right behind the home, so be sure to plan to see both of these spots in Florence on the same day!



Learn all about Da Vinci's inventions at the Da Vinci Museum.

Centuries later, Leonardo da Vinci is better known for his paintings than his machines—but in addition to being a painter, Da Vinci had an extraordinary curiosity about both the workings of the human body and various machines and inventions.

It is the last items that the Da Vinci Museum focuses on—complete with actual machines built from Da Vinci's designs, this museum is a fantastic opportunity to learn about the mind of Da Vinci beyond the Mona Lisa.

Churches & Monuments

Step inside the Duomo.

Though the Duomo is technically named the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, locals and tourists alike know the structure that famously dominates Florence's skyline simply as the Duomo (literally translated: "the dome").

Italian cathedrals aren't as elaborate inside as, say, Spanish ones, but they are beautiful, and the Duomo is *very* Italian—don't forget to admire the incredible marble floors once you're done staring up into the dome itself!

Entrance to the interior of the Duomo is free, though other surrounding attractions such as climbing the dome or bell tower do cost money and require you to purchase tickets in advance.



Visit the Santa Maria Novella Church.

Located near the Santa Maria train station bearing the same name, the Santa Maria Novella Church holds the curious designation of being remarkably close to some of Florence's best-known sights, while at the same time frequently being missed out on by tourists.

Don't make that mistake when deciding what to do in Florence: the Santa Maria Novella Church is beautiful, quiet, and home to not only some impressive works of art, but some additional buildings, such as a cloister and a chapel, that make it absolutely worth a visit while in Florence.

As a bonus, you'll likely experience the church with far fewer crowds than you'll see at the nearby Duomo!



Tour the Palazzo Vecchio.

How many cities can say that their current city hall has been serving in that role since the 13th century?

Not many, I'd guess, but Florence sure can! The Palazzo Vecchio, located right next door to the Uffizi Museum, is still Florence's seat of government.

These days, though, much of the building functions as a museum as well: stop by for a dash of history, a sprinkle of art, and some great views of Florence!

Skip the line by booking your Palazzo Vecchio tickets in advance!

Check out the Santa Croce Church.

Did you know that Michelangelo, Machiavelli, and Galileo—all Italians who are notable in wildly different ways—are all buried in the same place?

They are—and that place is Santa Croce Church in Florence!

Visit Santa Croce Church, and you'll see not only these graves but memorials to many other famous Italians who are buried elsewhere, such as Da Vinci and Dante.



Head inside the Battistero di San Giovanni.

At nearly 1000 years old, the baptistery is one of the oldest standing buildings in Florence, and historically among the most impressive—it's not every day that you get to see the spot where Dante was baptized!

When visiting the baptistery, be sure to take a moment to appreciate the intricately carved bronze doors on the exterior (they face the front of the Duomo). You'll likely have to fight through a crowd to take a look, but they are exquisite.

Visit the Tempio Maggiore.

Florence's beautiful houses of worship are naturally heavily weighted toward Catholicism, but the Great Synagogue is also stunning!

Tempio Maggiore is intricately designed both inside and out—be sure to stop by for a visit, and also look for its distinct turquoise arch in Florence’s skyline when you’re at Piazzale Michelangelo!



Step inside the Basilica de San Lorenzo.

As one of the largest churches in Florence, San Lorenzo is incredibly easy to work into your list of things to do in Florence: set mere steps away from the San Lorenzo Market, Mercato Centrale, and the Laurentian Library, this basilica is nothing if not easy to access.

Once the parish of the Medici family, you can step inside for a look into history that dates back around 1700 years (though this particular building was built on the site in 1400’s).

Keep in mind that this basilica is strict about its dress code (knees and shoulders covered), and unlike some churches in Italy, doesn’t have scarves on hand to cover with—you’ll need to dress according to the dress code or bring your own scarf to visit.

See the robes of St. Francis in the Church of Ognissanti.

This church is far from the best known in Florence, but those familiar with St. Francis of Assisi might be surprised to learn that his robes are actually in this small church in Florence.

Markets to Visit

Shop at the Mercato Centrale.

Florence’s most popular market is a gem for exploring: the displays are colorful and beautiful, the people friendly, and the food delicious.

Though there are plenty of tourists who go in and out of the market each day, plenty of locals do as well—if you’re in Florence long enough, the proprietors will start to recognize you (like the lady from the cheese counter who probably wonders why in the world we use so much *parmigiano reggiano*).



Visit the Mercato delle Pulci.

If getting an eclectic, offbeat souvenir is on your list of things to do in Florence, you need to stop by the Mercato delle Pulci—also known as Florence’s flea market.

Open every day in the Piazza dei Ciompi, you can find just about anything here, from antique furniture and art prints to costume jewelry and books.

If you want to see the market at its best, mark your calendar for the last Sunday of the month: around 100 more stalls open on that day, expanding the market into a much bigger enterprise than it is for normal, daily shopping.

Stop by Mercato Nuovo.

Souvenir shopping isn’t the only reason to stop by the Mercato Nuovo: this small market is also home to Florence’s Porcellino statue.

This bronze boar is popular for good reason: placing a coin into his mouth and then letting it fall into the fountain below is said to bring good luck, and a rub on his nose is said to ensure a return to Florence!



Enjoy the photo ops at the Mercato San Lorenzo.

Florence is generally considered to be an excellent place to buy classic Italian leather... and San Lorenzo Market is generally considered *not* the place to do it.

Though this market is touristy and tends to run to inexpensive quality these days, it's still fun to stop by and check out the displays—you'll see nothing but leather and souvenirs in all directions!

While this probably isn't the place to pick up a pricey leather jacket or similar, a photo op and possibly a chance to pick up some inexpensive trinkets for souvenirs mean that this market deserves to make the cut when you're deciding what to do in Florence.

Plus, since it's located right outside the Mercato Centrale, you'll likely be there anyway!



Check out the Mercato Fierucola.

Want to check out a market in Florence more populated by locals than tourists?

If you happen to be in town the third Sunday of the month, you're in luck!

Mercato Fierucola is held once a month in Santo Spirito Square, and though you'll find a wide range of goods available from local companies, the market focuses on natural products, including organic foods.

Other Florence Stops to Make

Pay a visit to the Boboli Gardens.

Formerly the haunt of the Medici family, the Boboli Gardens are easily Florence's most famous formal gardens.

Laid out in the 16th century and spanning a whopping 11 acres, the Boboli Gardens are the perfect place to retreat from the hustle and bustle of Florence and to take a moment to stop and smell the (literal) roses.

Our favorite spot in the gardens is in front of the Porcelain Museum—make sure to stop by in order to soak in the stunning views of the Tuscan countryside!



Stroll across the Ponte Vecchio.

As the first and longest-standing bridge across the Arno River in Florence, the Ponte Vecchio is among Florence's most recognizable sights.

Originally built by the Medici family, the Ponte Vecchio has long been a lively and crowded spot—a tradition that definitely lives on today, as it will likely be one of the most crowded spots you visit in Florence!

Don't let the crowds deter you, though: the bridge is beautiful, and home to shops along both sides that glitter with gold and jewelry (the only types of shops allowed on the Ponte Vecchio since the 16th century).



Walk across the Ponte Santa Trinita.

The Ponte Vecchio may be Florence's most famous bridge to take a stroll across, but that walk comes with one fatal flaw: when you're on the Ponte Vecchio, it's impossible to get a good view of it!

For that, take a short walk over to the Ponte Santa Trinita: as you're crossing, you'll have an incredible view of the Ponte Vecchio!

An optional addition to the walk: we personally feel this view is best lingered over with a scoop or two of gelato in hand.



Ride the carousel in the Piazza della Repubblica.

Release your inner child and take a ride on the carousel in the Piazza della Repubblica!

The carousel itself is an antique, and absolutely lights up the piazza with its bright and beautiful colors—I must have fifty photographs of it, but I keep snapping pictures everytime we walk by.



Visit the Santa Maria Novella Pharmacy.

The oldest and arguably the most ornate pharmacy in the world, the Santa Maria Novella Pharmacy dates back to the 13th century!

Step inside to gawk at the stunning rooms and to experience some truly exquisite lotions, perfumes, and soaps—some of which are still made with the original recipes crafted by monks hundreds of years ago.

If you want a truly unique souvenir from Florence, you can't get a better one than something from the Santa Maria Novella pharmacy.

Marvel at the Piazza della Signoria.

In Florence, you don't even need to visit a museum to marvel at epic works of art: the Piazza della Signoria is home to some truly incredible statues that you can admire for free!

In addition to original works of art and Neptune's Fountain, you'll also find a copy of the statue of David here—a nice preview of what you'll find in the Galleria dell'Accademia.



Take a walking (or biking!) tour of Florence to learn your way around the city.

Florence's small size makes it perfect to explore by foot or bike: if you're new in town and want to learn your way around the city, what better way to get started than a tour?

Walking or biking your way past Florence's most famous sights is the quickest and easiest way to orient yourself, not to mention tons of fun!

Soak in the sights at the Piazza del Duomo.

It may be one of the most touristy places in Florence (you'll definitely have to fight through a crowd or two here if you don't like setting your alarm clock for dawn), but the Piazza del Duomo is definitely worth seeing.

Centrally located in small Florence, we recommend starting one of your days in Florence here—many of the most popular things to do in Florence, from entering the Duomo and baptistery to climbing the bell tower—are located right in this bustling square!



Check out the Vasari Corridor.

A kilometer-long corridor that serves as an offbeat and often overlooked art museum, provides an epic view of the Ponte Vecchio over the Arno River *and* connects three famous Florence spots (Palazzo Pitti, Palazzo Vecchio, and the Uffizi Gallery): that is the unusual nature of the Vasari Corridor.



Get (a little bit) off the beaten path in Santo Spirito.

Want to get a break from crowded tourist spots without traveling too far in Florence?

When you're already on the opposite side of the Arno River from the Duomo (perhaps when you're visiting the Boboli Gardens or Gusta Pizza), go ahead and wander over to the Santo Spirito neighborhood: despite it being a charming walk, many tourists never reach this part of Florence.

This neighborhood is adorable, and it's the perfect place to find a quirky cafe, a cute bookshop, or a great market (Mercato Fierucola that I discuss above is held here).

We recommend starting at the aptly named Santo Spirito Basilica and wandering around from there!

Stop by and see the Bull of Santa Maria del Fiore.

If you are standing in line to climb the cupola of Florence's Duomo (or if you just walk by the line), you'll be able to look up and spot an unusual sight. Underneath the dome, among the many carvings, one sticks out more than the rest: a bull!

No one is quite sure why this bull was carved into the third largest cathedral in the world, but rumor has it that it may have been either a tribute to the working animals who contributed to the building of the Duomo, or an act of petty revenge by a spurned lover—personally, I find the second theory more entertaining!



Stroll through the Bardini Gardens.

Did you know that your ticket to the Boboli Gardens is actually a ticket for two gardens in Florence?

The beautiful Bardini Gardens are smaller than the better-known Boboli Gardens, often less crowded, and boast incredible views over Florence.

If you're lucky enough to be visiting from mid-April to early May, you may also be lucky enough to spot the aptly named Wisteria Tunnel when it's at its best—gallivanting under these beautiful purple flowers is still high on our wish list for things to do in Florence!

Visit the Fountain of Neptune.

There are plenty of Fountains of Neptune throughout Italy, but Florence's is particularly beautiful: more than 400 years old and carved entirely of marble and bronze, it is absolutely worth a look while you're visiting the Piazza della Signoria.



More Epic Experiences to Have in Florence

Buy some incredible Italian leather.

Italian leather is famous around the world, and Florence is known for having some of the best leather in Italy. In other words, if you're looking to splurge on a beautiful jacket or bag, this is the place!

There are essentially two ways to [buy leather in Florence](#): to head to a tourist market and pick up something relatively inexpensive that is likely not nearly as good of quality as the salesman claims, or to do some thorough research and pay a pretty penny in a shop.

Neither way is wrong, but if you go with the first, plan on your purchase lasting a few years—not a lifetime.

Embrace Florence's art culture with a drawing class.

This is one of the only items on this things to do in Florence list that we will never do, as we are both utterly hopeless at fine arts—but if you're artistically inclined, there's no better spot to brush up on your skills than Florence!

Walk in the steps of some of the world's most famous artists, draw some truly remarkable places, and revel in learning more about art in the Cradle of the Renaissance.

Stroll through Florence at night.

Some of our fondest memories of Florence are from wandering the streets at night: the buskers out playing music, the full restaurant tables spilling out into the streets, the twinkling lights from the shops... the atmosphere in Florence after the sun sets is lovely to behold.



Ride a Vespa through the streets of Florence (and beyond).

Is there anything better than hopping on a vintage Vespa on a beautiful day and winding through the streets of Florence and the hills of Tuscany?

We've yet to find anything that can beat it—our vintage Vespa tour remains among our most cherished memories of Florence, and we highly recommend taking one!

See Florence from the water with a boat ride on the Arno River.

Venice isn't the only place in Italy worthy of a boat ride: hop on a boat tour in Florence to enjoy views of the city from the river, and to get a rare glimpse of the bottom of the Ponte Vecchio!

Check out the Appennine Colossus.

Though this is technically located about 7 miles outside of the city, there's no doubt that a visit to the Appennine Colossus is one of the most unique things to do in Florence!

Standing around 35 feet tall, this giant of a man appears to simply erupt from the rock beneath him.

Located in the gardens of the Villa Medici at Pratolino, if you're looking for something truly offbeat in Florence, this is it.

The statue depicts a large man, but the interior is actually a building, complete with a fireplace—word on the street is that when a fire is going, smoke pours out of the giant's nose!

Shop for classic Florentine stationery.

Florence is well-known for its beautifully crafted stationery and hand-bound books.

While it does come at a cost these days, if you're in search of a special Florentine souvenir, stationery can make an excellent one.

For high quality (and matching high price tags), consider visiting Giulio Giannini & Figlio near the Palazzo Pitti, or Pineider near the Piazza Signoria.

For more accessible stationery, the chain of Il Papiro is popular and has several locations in Florence.



Learn important Florentine history through the eyes of the Medici.

The Medici family dominated Florentine politics and culture for centuries, including through the Renaissance.

This is the family that greatly expanded Florence's currency and banking system, nurtured the talent of Michelangelo, consulted with popes, had the Vasari Corridor built, kept a hippopotamus in the Boboli Gardens, and shaped centuries of Florentine policy.

Of course, it didn't all go well—schemes, murders, falling in and out of favor, wars, and more also plagued both Florence and the Medici throughout their years in power, but there's no escaping that the Medici had an impressive role in shaping the Florence that we know today.

If you're interested in this chapter of Florentine history and want to go beyond simply visiting sights related to them when picking things to do in Florence, consider a Medici tour to learn more about their time in the city.



Soar over Tuscany in a hot air balloon.

The Tuscan countryside is unique: the rolling hills, the vineyards, the hilltop towns, the soft golden light... if there's ever a landscape that deserves an epic overhead view, it's this one!

If you're up for a splurge that you'll never forget, book a hot air balloon ride over Tuscany and check out one of the world's most well-loved landscapes from above.



Check out Florence's epic annual events & festivals.

arrival in February. Feast Day for the Patron Saint of Florence in July. Feast Day of San Lorenzo in August. Festival of the Paper Lanterns in September. Countless more, waiting to be discovered.

No matter what month you come to Florence, chances are that an epic festival of some kind will be taking place: before leaving on your trip, be sure to do an internet search for the dates you'll be in the city and find out what event you need to add to your list of things to do in Florence!

Fun Day Trips from Florence

There are some truly incredible day trips to take from Florence—here are some at the top of our list of fun things to do in Florence.

There are an endless number of excellent Florence day trips, of course—to cover them all requires a post in and of itself—but these are all great starting points, as they are fairly close and easy to get to, and also offer a distinct taste of Italy outside the Cradle of the Renaissance without needing to stray far.



San Gimignano & A Winery

San Gimignano is one of the most picturesque towns in Tuscany—home to arguably the best gelato in Italy, some truly amazing hilltop views, and seven remaining out of what were once hundreds of medieval towers, a visit to San Gimignano won't be forgotten soon.

Though today San Gimignano is small, it was once an important city on trade routes leading to Rome and has a lot of stories to tell.

Pair a visit to San Gimignano with a visit to Chianti wine country, and you're guaranteed to have the perfect Tuscan getaway.

This [incredibly popular tour](#) covers San Gimignano, the Chianti wine region, and Siena, while making logistics easy!



Siena

Siena is the second-largest city in Tuscany, and it fought several wars with Florence over the centuries.

Today, Siena is known for its intricate architecture, gorgeous setting in the Tuscan countryside, and the Palio di Siena, the biannual horse races that still take place in the town square (which is actually an oval).

Siena is one of our favorite day trips from Florence, and it is one that is fairly simple to pull off doing independently.

Pisa & Lucca

If you've done some research on Pisa, you'll notice most people don't recommend adding it to your list of fun things to do in Florence—there's not much to it!

But, if you are dying to see the leaning tower, consider spending the morning in Pisa and then heading onto Lucca, which is a beautiful Tuscan city that still retains its city walls—you can even walk on top of them!

Bologna

If you're a foodie, consider taking a day trip from Florence to Bologna: as the capital of Italy's foodie region of Emilia-Romagna, Bologna is a place that you go to eat *well*... and then spend the rest of your day climbing medieval towers to burn it off.

As Bologna is located in Emilia-Romagna, you'll likely notice some key regional differences in their food as compared to Tuscany—and if you have limited time in Italy, this is a great way to get a taste of just how varied Italian cuisine can be.



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