

Fodor's Travel

# FLORENCE & TUSCANY

EASY PLANNING  
LOCAL WRITERS  
ITINERARIES  
HELPFUL MAPS



# Fodor's Travel



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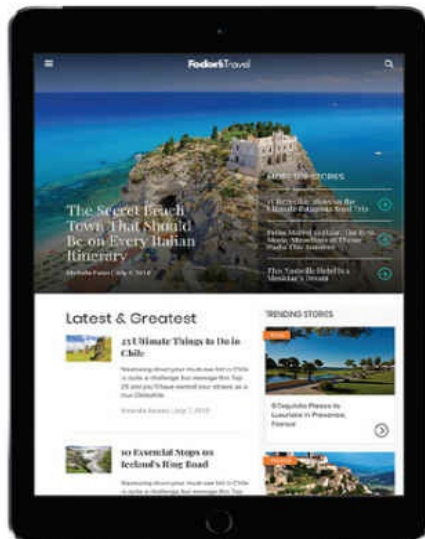
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# About This Book












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## Icons

Look for the following icons to help you identify our listings:

-  Sights
-  Hotels
-  Restaurants
-  Shops
-  Nightlife
-  Performing Arts
-  Activities
-  Beaches

Symbols used in our listings:

-  Address
-  Telephone
-  Fax
-  Website
-  Email
-  Admission fee
-  Closed times
-  Transit info
-  Directions
-  Number of hotel rooms
-  Hotel meal plans

 Reservations

 Dress code

 No credit cards

 Price

 Cross-reference

 Golf facilities

## **Fodor's Recommendations**

Everything in this guide is worth doing—we don't cover what isn't—but our favorite places are designated **Fodor'sChoice**★ to indicate our highest recommendation.

## **Sights and Activities**

We look high and low to find the most interesting things for you to see and do. For attractions, we always list adult admission fees; additional discounts are usually available for children, students, and seniors.

## **Restaurants**

Unless we state otherwise, restaurants are open for lunch and dinner daily. We classify every restaurant with a price category as well as listing the average cost of a main course at dinner (or if dinner is not served, at lunch). For more detailed restaurant reviews, visit [Fodors.com](https://www.fodors.com).

## Hotels

While we like all the hotels we recommend, we promise to always give you both the pros and cons. Unless otherwise specified, you can expect private bath, phone, and TV in your room. We classify every hotel with a price category as well as listing the average cost of a double room in high season. For more detailed hotel reviews, visit [Fodors.com](https://www.fodors.com).



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### EUGENE FODOR



Hungarian-born Eugene Fodor (1905–91) began his travel career as an interpreter on a French cruise ship. The experience inspired him to write *On the Continent* (1936), the first guidebook to receive annual updates and discuss a country's way of life as well as its sights. Fodor later joined the U.S. Army and worked for the OSS in World War II. After the war, he kept up his intelligence work while expanding his guidebook series. During the Cold War, many guides were written by fellow agents who understood the value of insider information. Today's guides continue Fodor's legacy by providing travelers with timely coverage, insider tips, and cultural context.

# Welcome to Florence & Tuscany

Florence and Tuscany conjure images of superb Renaissance art and landscapes famous for rolling hills, olive groves, and cypress trees. In Florence, ancient palaces and churches await exploration. You can choose between seeing masterpieces by Michelangelo or shopping for locally made goods. The many pleasures of Tuscany include tasting wine in Chianti and simply relaxing in the piazzas of medieval towns. Whatever you do, the combination of great art, sumptuous countryside, and memorable food and wine makes a trip to this enchanting part of Italy unforgettable.

## TOP REASONS TO GO

- ★ **Renaissance Art:** Works by da Vinci and Michelangelo, the Uffizi's treasures, and more.
- ★ **Authentic Shops:** Leather goods, gold, and handmade paper delight discerning buyers.
- ★ **Iconic Churches:** Florence's Duomo and Arezzo's Basilica di San Francesco, to start.
- ★ **Charming Towns:** Lucca, Siena, Cortona, San Gimignano, and others are enthralling.
- ★ **Wineries:** At visitor-friendly vineyards, you can taste the wine and meet the makers.
- ★ **Traditional Cuisine:** Tuscany's earthy, farm-fresh seasonal fare is heaven for foodies.

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Tuscany's rolling hills have charmed visitors for centuries.

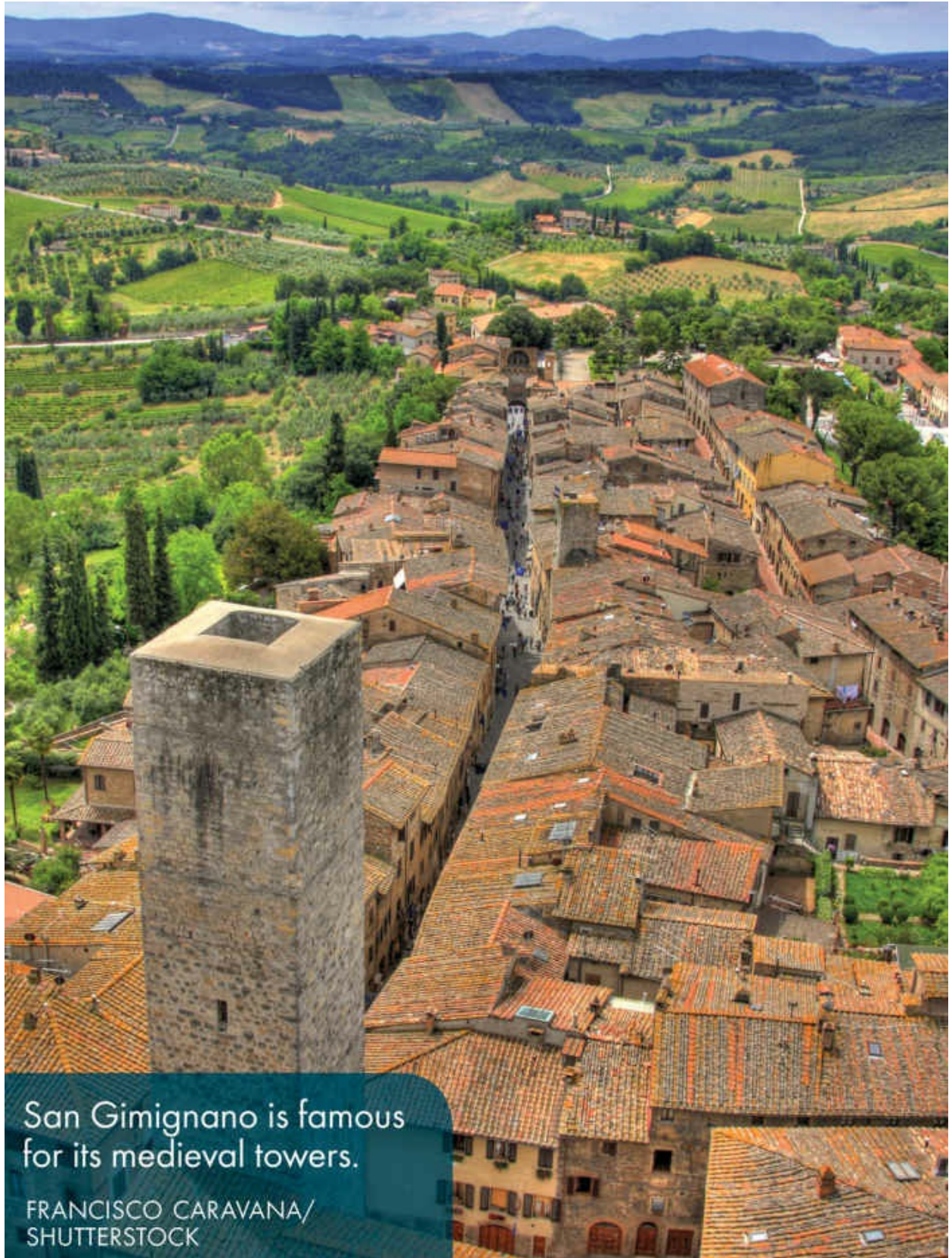
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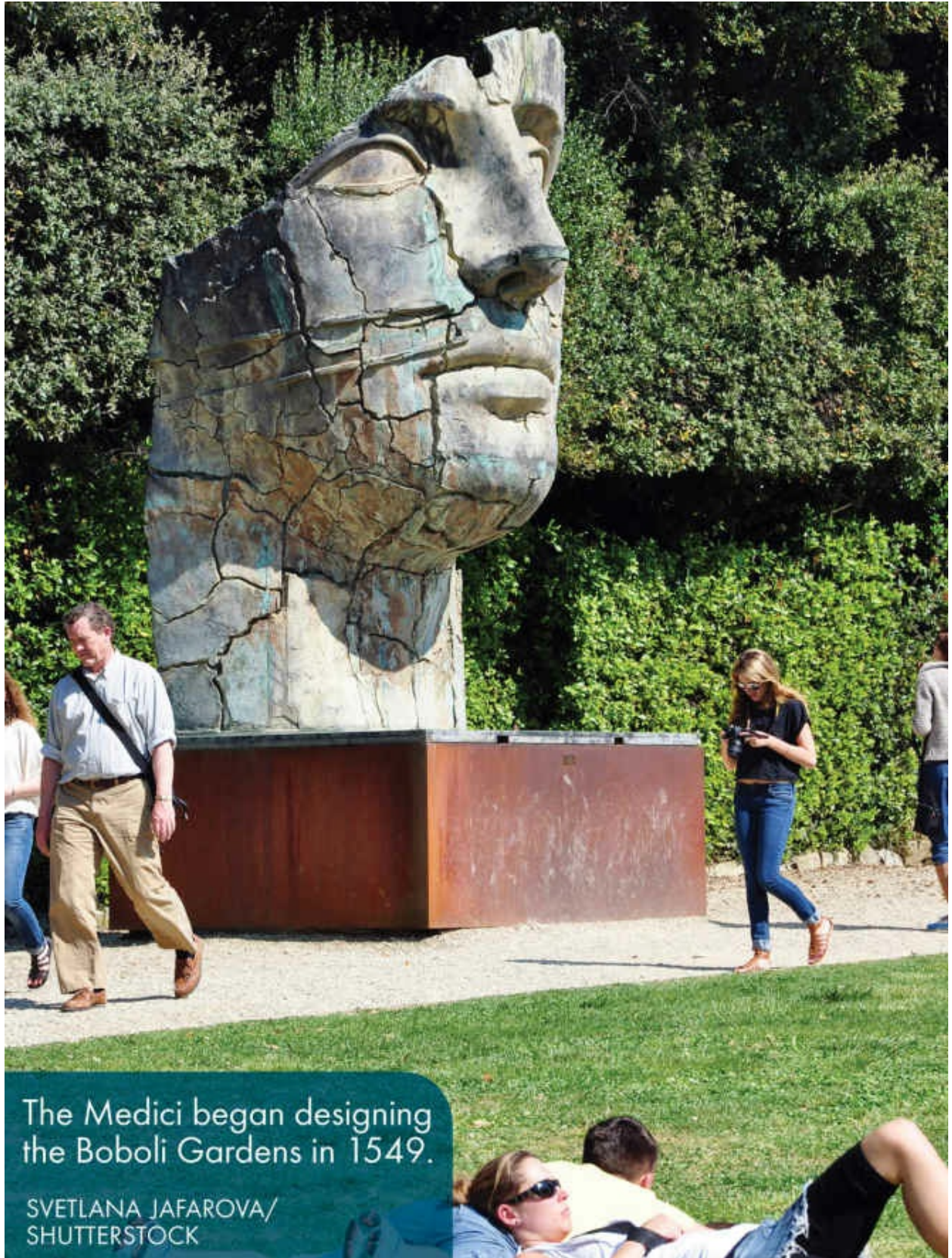
The magnificent Duomo dominates Florence's skyline.

GIJS VAN OUWERKERK / SHUTTERSTOCK



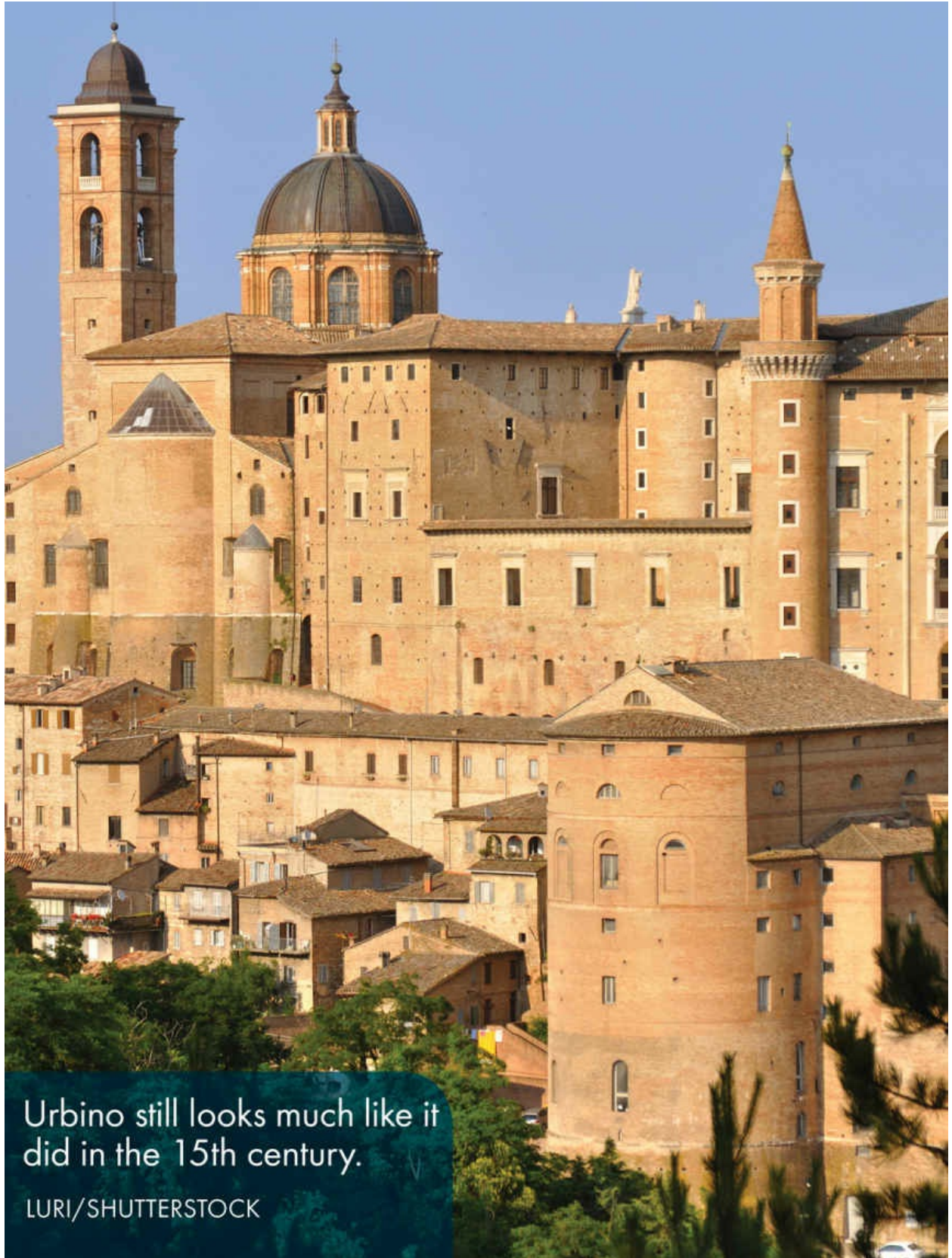
San Gimignano is famous  
for its medieval towers.

FRANCISCO CARAVANA/  
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The Medici began designing  
the Boboli Gardens in 1549.

SVETLANA JAFAROVA/  
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Urbino still looks much like it did in the 15th century.

LURI/SHUTTERSTOCK



Climbing Pisa's Leaning Tower  
is an unforgettable experience.

NICKOLAY VINOKUROV/  
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The façade of Orvieto's cathedral is a Gothic masterpiece.

ONAIRDA/SHUTTERSTOCK



Medieval jousts are still held  
in Arezzo's Piazza Grande.

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Siena's Piazza del Campo  
dates to the 12th century.

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## Chapter 1

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# EXPERIENCE FLORENCE & TUSCANY



## 24 ULTIMATE EXPERIENCES

Florence & Tuscany offer terrific experiences that should be on every traveler's list. Here are Fodor's top picks for a memorable trip.

### 1 Relax in the Val d'Orcia

Spend a day exploring Montalcino and sipping wine from its Brunello vineyards, or taste distinctive pecorino cheeses in Pienza. For ultimate relaxation, try the Piscina Val di Sole public hot springs in Bagno Vignoni. (Ch. 7)

### 2 Visit Volterra

Visit Palazzo dei Priori, which is considered the oldest town hall in Tuscany, with its central tower built in the 1200s. (Ch. 5)

### 3 Visit Assisi

Assisi, birthplace of Saint Francis, has been a Christian pilgrimage site since he was buried there in the 1300s. (Ch. 8)

### 4 Explore Giardino di Boboli

If you are searching for green in Florence, head to the grounds of Palazzo Pitti at the Giardino di Boboli. Explore vine-covered pergolas, stone paths, and grand staircases. (Ch. 3)

### 6 Dip Cantucci in Vin Santo

At the end of *cena* (dinner) in Tuscany, order *cantucci* with vin santo. *Cantucci* are crunchy, twice-baked, oblong-shape almond biscuits with origins in the city of Prato. (Ch. 4)

## **5** See *Birth of Venus*

Anyone who has seen the famous painting of the golden-haired goddess of love in popular culture will stand in awe at the live *Birth of Venus*. (Ch. 3)

## **7** People-watch in Siena's Piazza del Campo

Siena's Piazza del Campo is an ideal spot for people-watching while sitting on the cobblestone piazza or in one of the nearby restaurants and cafés. (Ch. 5)

## **8** Climb Florence's Duomo

Climb 463 steps through narrow passageways that were used during the dome's construction and out to the terrace for incredible views of Firenze. (Ch. 3)

## **9** Soak in Terme di Saturnia

Legend says Saturn, irritated by the behavior he saw on earth, threw a thunderbolt down, creating the bubbling mineral-rich waters of Saturnia. (Ch. 7)

## **10** Rub Il Porcellino for Good Luck

Il Porcellino (the piglet) is said to bestow good luck on people who touch his snout. (Ch. 3)

## **11** Buy Leather

For gloves, try Madova; for leather jackets, Benheart; and for bags and small leather goods, Scuola del Cuoio. (Ch. 3)

## **12** Walk Along Lucca's Walls

This elevated walkway is the site of what for some is a daily ritual of

*passaggiata delle mura* (walk along the walls). (Ch. 4)

## **13 Picnic in Parco di Pratolino**

You can picnic at the park or eat lunch or dinner at Zocchi, a traditional Tuscan restaurant that has been in business since 1783. (Ch. 3)

## **14 Stare at the Leaning Tower of Pisa**

The most popular site in Pisa is said to have begun its famous incline during construction in the 1100s and it has continued since. (Ch. 4)

## **15 Watch the Sunset Over Ponte Vecchio**

It's best to stand on Ponte Santa Trinita, or anywhere along the Arno as the sun is setting, to see the sky changing hues. (Ch. 3)

## **16 Explore the Oltrarno**

This has traditionally been home to Florence's working class, filled with leather makers, jewelers, artists, and other craftspeople. (Ch. 3)

## **17 Taste Wine in Chianti**

With 17,000 acres of vineyards, sipping your way through Chianti is a fine way to spend a day. (Ch. 5)

## **18 Feel the Glow in Arezzo**

If the main piazza of Arezzo looks familiar, it could be because scenes of Roberto Benigni's film *Life is Beautiful* were shot here. (Ch. 6)

## **19 Climb San Gimignano's Towers**

Today, 14 of these medieval high-rises remain, and you can climb them for sweeping Tuscan hillside views. (Ch. 5)

## **20** Eat *Bistecca Alla Fiorentina*

This 2½ pound T-bone steak is cooked rare on a wooden grill; side dishes are ordered separately.

## **21** Hike in *Foreste Casentinesi*

The forest's natural beauty is unmistakable, with waterfalls, sweeping vistas, and soaring eagles. Churches dot the hiking trails. (*Ch. 6*)

## **22** See *Michelangelo's David*

*David*, 17 feet of Carrara marble carved by Michelangelo in the 1500s, could be the most famous man in the world. (*Ch. 3*)

## **23** See *Views From San Miniato al Monte*

Walk up the hill to San Miniato al Monte and you'll reach the Romanesque basilica's courtyard, where the views are spectacular and crowds are thin. (*Ch. 3*)

## **24** Find *Views in Fiesole*

Explore Roman baths, a Roman amphitheater, and Etruscan walls. The roads leading to Fiesole are lined with vine-covered walls and Tuscan villas. (*Ch. 3*)

# 7 Best Hilltop Villages in Tuscany

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## **MONTEFOLLONICO, SIENA**

Montefollonico's name alludes to textile workers, likely honoring the wool-working monks who properly settled the village in the Middle Ages, though the area has been inhabited for over 60,000 years, when Neanderthals left behind some of the artifacts that have been more recently uncovered. Relatively unique among the medieval villages of Italy, Montefollonico's restaurant La Chiusa may be a bigger draw than its old churches and storied streets. It once held a Michelin star and remains a popular destination restaurant for foodies and celebrities.

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## **ASSISI, UMBRIA**

Assisi claims history as ancient as 1000 BCE and is probably best known for its most famous resident, St. Francis, whose 13th-century basilica is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In fact, the entire village itself is, too. Plenty of other impressive churches, Roman ruins, and not one but two castles top the extensive list of architectural offerings of this ancient town. From ceramics to medieval weaponry, Assisi's artisan history remains strong. Cured meats and chocolate are popular here, so grab a snack between sword fights.

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## **ORVIETO, UMBRIA**

A quintessential medieval Italian village so evocative that dozens of Italian TV shows and movies have been filmed there, Orvieto is also a foodie's dream. Famous for both white and red wines, Orvieto's culinary classics run the gamut from boar and dove to pastas and pastries that will keep you eating around the clock. Above all, olive oil reigns supreme in this Umbrian village, which is probably the reason why Orvieto's culinary specialty seems to be... everything. While architectural wonders adorn the village (including the massive 13th-century Duomo), what's underground may be even more

fascinating: a series of more than 1,000 tunnels form a labyrinth under Orvieto, and much of it is now open to the public for exploration.

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#### **PITIGLIANO, TUSCANY**

While most Italian villages are overflowing with impressive churches, Pitigliano may be most famous for its synagogue, drawing attention to its rich history of Jewish settlement and giving the old town its nickname of Little Jerusalem. Of course, countless churches dot the rest of this Tuscan village, as do a smattering of museums and other historic gems like the Palazzo Orsini, a Renaissance palace built on the ruins of medieval fortresses and containing both art and archaeological museums of its own.

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#### **SAN GIMIGNANO, TUSCANY**

While most medieval towers have given way to war and erosion through the centuries, San Gimignano retains so many that it has been dubbed the Town of Fine Towers and its historic center is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. While packed with immaculate examples of medieval architecture, this village is among the more tourist-minded, with contemporary events like music festivals and art exhibitions, and plenty of modern conveniences and services for travelers. San Gimignano even has its own app.

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#### **SORANO, TUSCANY**

Ham it up in Sorano, where the local ham is so revered they hold a festival for it every August. If you don't eat pork, don't worry; there are plenty of other local specialties highlighted in this festival, particularly cheese, oranges, and the ever-popular Italian liqueur, limoncello. Don't miss the Masso Leopoldina (sometimes called the Rocca Vecchia), which was once central to the defense of the town but is now a fabulous terrace for panoramic views of Tuscany (and a great place to swig another limoncello if you can smuggle some up).

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#### **VOLTERRA, UMBRIA**

Twelve miles from the better-known village of San Gimignano is the less visited (less crowded) Volterra. While there are some serious medieval remnants in this village, it's much more famous for the historical periods before and after. Some of its ancient Etruscan fortification walls still surround Roman ruins, including an impressive amphitheater worth exploring, and the



Florentine influence of the Medici family left behind some dazzling Renaissance art and architecture throughout the once bustling mercantile village. The alabaster trade remains strong today and provides beautiful souvenirs from this Tuscan treasure.

# Free Things to Do in Florence

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## **GIARDINO DELLE ROSE**

Florence has no shortage of gardens to linger in. One of the most beautiful is Giardino delle Rose, which is less crowded than the popular Giardino di Boboli, and has no entrance fee. Its terraces are blooming with 400 varieties of roses and are decorated with 12 sculptures by Belgian artist Jean-Michel Folon.

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## **SANT'AMBROGIO MARKET**

Even if you aren't looking to buy produce to cook at home, walking through the local outdoor market, Sant'Ambrogio, can be a (free) activity all on its own. Every morning an entire city block is filled with vendors selling fruits, vegetables, local honey, and plants.

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## **IL DUOMO**

As you walk around the center of Florence, Il Duomo (Santa Maria del Fiore, or Florence cathedral) is a monument that can't be missed. Standing before it and marveling at its intricate green and white marble facade might leave you in awe.

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## **FESTA DELLA RIFICOLONA**

If you are in Florence on September 7 and 8, don't miss one of the city's biggest street parties, celebrating the Virgin Mary's birthday. Festa della Rificolona is said to date from the 17th century when citizens across Florence and outside its city walls carried lanterns to guide their pilgrimage to the church of Santissima Annunziata, which is dedicated to the Virgin Mary, on the eve of her birth.

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## **FIESOLE ANTIQUES MARKET**

With only the price of a bus ticket you can ride up to the northeast hills above Florence, to the town of Fiesole. The town is small, but on the first Sunday of

the month its piazza holds an antiques market of vintage clothing, home wares, and other decades-old finds. You can spend an afternoon perusing the market for treasures to take home with you.

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#### **LE MURATE**

Florence may be known as an epicenter of Renaissance art, but if you want to see something different, and for free, head to Le Murate, a former convent and prison that is now a contemporary art gallery and events space. Artists from across the globe exhibit here with a particular emphasis on multimedia installations which make use of former prison cells as showcasing rooms.

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#### **LISTEN TO LIVE MUSIC AT LA CITÉ**

You're unlikely to visit Florence for its nightlife, but if you want a lively night out, the Oltrarno, whose streets are lined with bars and restaurants, is one option. La Cité, a popular Oltrarno bookstore, is a budget-friendly café for reading and studying by day and lingering with a cocktail at night.

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#### **LOGGIA DEI LANZI**

Piazza della Signoria (the square in front of Florence's city government building, Palazzo Vecchio), is one of the most grand piazzas in Florence, but what makes it even more so, is its open-air sculpture gallery—Loggia della Signoria, also called Loggia dei Lanzi. The 14th-century loggia, or arched gallery, is to your right as you walk toward the Galleria degli Uffizi. It is free to enter at any time of night or day to see its sculptures.

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#### **SAN MINIATO AL MONTE**

The Romanesque church San Miniato al Monte is a bit more challenging to reach than others in Florence, with its location high on a hill near Piazzale Michelangelo, but it's one of the most beautiful free attractions in the city. City views from its courtyard are spectacular.

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#### **PIAZZALE MICHELANGELO**

This could be the most famous view of Florence's skyline at sunset, or any time of day, where you can see the major architectural sites of the city, like Il Duomo, Ponte Vecchio, and Palazzo Vecchio and the hills that surround them, from above. Be ready for crowds, whether you stand in Piazzale Michelangelo or sit on the steps leading up to it, as you watch terracotta

rooftops transform into pink hues.

# 10 Unique Foodie Experiences

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## **PIENZA PECORINO**

Pecorino comes from the Italian word, pecora, meaning sheep. In Pienza, in the Val d'Orcia, a cypress grove-dotted and hilly region of Tuscany, sheep are plentiful and so is pecorino. The cheese from the province in Siena is not to be confused with pecorino from southern Italy (like pecorino Romano), which is a bit harder like the consistency of a Parmesan. In Pienza, pecorino is soft and sometimes sweet and often takes on hints of the wild greenery that grows in the region, like fennel and clover. Taste it at Podere Il Casale or Fattoria Pianporcino.

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## **TRIPPA AND LAMPREDOTTO**

One of the most traditional foods you can eat in Florence is offal—no, not terrible, yes, organ meat—in a sandwich. This lunchtime favorite dates back to the Renaissance and is, specifically, cow's stomach panini served on crusty rolls from street carts. You can go for lampredotto, the most Florentine version, where a cow's fourth stomach is typically slow-cooked with tomato, parsley, onion, and celery. Or, try trippa alla Fiorentina, which is usually from a cow's first stomach. For either variety, I Trippaio di San Frediano di Simone (Piazza dei Nerli) frequented by local construction workers, or Trippa del Porcellino (Via di Cappaccio at Piazza del Mercato Nuovo), both have strong followings by visitors and locals.

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## **PROSCIUTTO DI NORCIA**

To understand and taste the differences among all of the types of prosciutto that are produced in Italy could make your head spin and stomach full for days. To keep it simple, you can try what's considered some of the best, from Norcia, Umbria. Norcia, a town in eastern Umbria, has highly specific rules about its prosciutto crudo production, covering the breed and size of pigs, and the process for curing, and aging its meat. L'Antica Norcineria Fratelli

Ansuini has been curing meats since 1940 and there you can sample its prosciutto, take it home with you, or have a picnic at its La Bottega.

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#### **FRUIT FILLED WITH GELATO**

Among the bounty of gelaterie in Florence, Gelateria de' Medici (on Via dello Statuto and in Piazza Beccaria) has a local following. Seasonal flavors like fig, persimmon, and chestnut are intriguing in a cup or cone on their own, but, like its namesake Florentine family, Medici gives its gelato high status, with its creativity in the form of fruit filled with gelato. Yes, entire pineapples, mangoes, and pears are hollowed out and filled with that flavor of gelato. Look for these fancy fruits in the freezer all year round, with varieties changing according to the weather.

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#### **FAGIOLINA DEL TRASIMENO**

Beans are a staple in Tuscan and Umbrian cuisine, served in soups, salads, and on their own with a touch of olive oil. The Fagiolina del Trasimeno, a rare white bean with a thin shell and delicate flavor, which grows only in Umbria, is found in specialty shops and among the bounty at farmers' markets. Try it as a soup at Trattoria Pallotta in Assisi, or on crostoni at Ristorante La Cantina in Castiglione del Lago.

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#### **GO TO CHOCOLATE SCHOOL**

A sensual, sensory culinary experience is what Umbrian chocolatier Perugina has been selling since it invented its silver and blue foil-wrapped Baci—which means kiss in Italian, and contains a love note inside each bonbon-like chocolate—in 1922. Learn how this passion peddler makes its signature hazelnut-, dark chocolate-, and gianduia-filled concoction and other products from its repertoire at its chocolate school.

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#### **VERNACCIA DI SAN GIMIGNANO**

Beginning in the 13th century, Vernaccia from the Tuscan hill town with 14 towers—San Gimignano—was a libation for the elite, and today there are about 70 producers who bottle their own brand of Tuscany's most well-known white. You can taste the dry varietal with a distinct mineral scent at any number of wine bars in town, and estates that surround it such as Campochiarenti and Cantine Gini.

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### **TRUFFLE HUNTING**

If you've ever wanted to find a pot of gold, truffle hunting could be for you. You can search for the coveted pungent ingredient all over Tuscany. The town of San Miniato, 27 miles west of Florence, is known as prime real estate for a foodie's favorite fungus. Truffle hunting guides, like Massimo Cucchiara of Truffle in Tuscany, or from Savitar Tartufi, will take you out searching for white truffles from October to January (with peak season in November), and black varieties from June until fall.

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### **CINGHIALE SAUSAGE**

In Tuscany, there's an animal that roams freely—cinghiale, or wild boar. The male pigs are found commonly in central and southern Italy and are used to make cured meats (and ragù meat sauce). You can find cinghiale served on a panino in almost any sandwich shop across Tuscany. Try it with butter at I Fratellini in Florence or with Pecorino at Gino Cacino di Angelo in Siena.

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### **LUNIGIANA HONEY**

In the mountains of Lunigiana, which stretch across northern Tuscany and Liguria, beekeeping has been a tradition since the 1500s. Il Miele di Acacia (acacia honey) is produced in May and is light and syrupy, while Il Miele di Castagno (chestnut honey) is produced in June and July and is dark and a bit bitter. Both Lunigiana regional varieties have achieved DOP status, meaning the honey is certified as local with the name of one of 14 towns or villages where it was produced on each jar, such as at Il Posticcio in Mulazzo or at Ca' d'r Moreto in Canepari.

# 10 Vineyard and Wine Tasting Experiences

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## **ANTINORI**

Antinori produces one of the best-known Super Tuscans, called Tignorello, a blend of Sangiovese with Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc. They offer several options for touring the winery and cellars, always followed by a tasting.

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## **AVIGNONESI**

The 16th-century manor house surrounded by vineyards makes a wonderful setting for tastings, and visitors can also see the vin santo aging cellar, the drying room, and the barrel tunnel while learning about the biodynamic wine-making process. Opt for special offerings like cooking classes and hot-air balloon rides.

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## **BADIA A COLTIBUONO**

Guests can choose from a number of tour and tasting options, including visiting the former crypt to see Chianti Classico aging in oak barrels, or taking a walking tour of the vineyards, about a 20-minute drive from the abbey.

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## **BARONE RICASOLI**

Not only is it the oldest winery in Italy, but Bettino Ricasoli, known as the “Iron Baron,” is said to have come up with the original formula for Chianti wine in 1872. Pop by the wineshop for a tasting, or make an appointment for a winery tour.

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## **CAPEZZANA**

Visits, by reservation only, include a tour of their cellars, olive oil mill, and vin santo aging cellar, followed by a tasting of wine and extra virgin olive oil.



Cooking classes are also available. There's even a charming agriturismo with eight rooms where you can spend the night.

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#### **CASTELLARE DI CASTELLINA**

Besides offering panoramic views, the winery is particularly known for its I Sodi di S. Niccolò Super Tuscan and Chianti Classico, along with vin santo dessert wine, all produced using sustainable agriculture. Make an appointment for an hour-long tour of the cellars followed by a tasting.

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#### **CASTELLO DI AMA**

Ninety-minute visits (which must be booked in advance) include a tour of the cellars, the 18th-century villas and gardens on the property, and the artwork, and end with a tasting of Castello di Ama wines. If you can't get enough, spend the night in one of the four suites located in the Villa Ricucci.

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#### **CASTIGLION DEL BOSCO**

Castiglion del Bosco is part of a full-fledged resort including the luxury Rosewood Castiglion del Hotel. Private tours, by appointment only, include visits to the cellars and vineyards plus tastings ranging from several wines to full vertical tastings.

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#### **FONTODI**

Tours, offered by appointment only, take visitors through the winery, cellars (some of their wines are being aged in terracotta pots), and bottling process, and end with a tasting. If you've come with a group, look into staying at one of their three villas nestled in the vineyards.

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#### **SALCHETO**

Overlooking the hill town of Montepulciano, Salcheto is a biodynamic winery using fully sustainable practices, including energy from renewable sources such as solar, recycled materials in the winery building, and purified and recycled wastewaters.

# 10 Best Museums in Florence

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## **PALAZZO PITTI**

Florence's rich and powerful all walked down the halls of Palazzo Pitti. In its current museum status, its gallery rooms and royal apartments are lavishly decorated as a palace should be. With more than 500 paintings (mostly Renaissance-era) including works by Raphael and Titian in its major gallery—The Palatine—the combination of gold and filigree and artwork can be a bit overwhelming. If you have the stamina, you can visit three other collections in the palace—Modern Art (18th to 20th century), a treasury from the Medici and bishops of Salzburg, and a costume-and-fashion museum, which is sometimes closed to install new exhibits.

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## **BARGELLO**

The fortress-like Bargello has had many incarnations—family palace, Florentine government building, prison, and the site of executions on its patio. As a nod to its conflicted past, it also houses a collection of weapons, armor, and medals from the powerful Medici family. The real draw though is Donatello's bronze *David* standing victorious over the head of Goliath, Michelangelo's marble *Bacchus*, and a collection from major Renaissance sculptors.

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## **GALLERIA DEGLI UFFIZI**

It's one of the most visited museums in Florence, Italy, and the world, for a reason. Head to the former offices of Florentine magistrates to see a wow-worthy collection of art. In one room, gaze at Sandro Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* and *Primavera*, and in another, Leonardo da Vinci's *Annunciation*. Works by Michelangelo, Raphael, Giotto, and Caravaggio are also here and museum aficionados may want to spend several hours exploring. Avoid the lines by booking tickets in advance on the Uffizi Gallery website.

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## **GALLERIA DELL'ACCADEMIA**

Come for *David*, stay to see everything else. There's no doubt that the line running down Via Ricasoli to enter a seemingly nondescript building is for Michelangelo's most famous man in the world—*Il Davide*. There is something marvelous about seeing his 17 feet of artfully carved Carrara marble “in the flesh,” poised before his battle with Goliath. After you've caught your breath, check out the museum's early- to late-Renaissance works by Sandro Botticelli, and Andrea del Sarto; Florentine Gothic paintings; and collection of musical instruments.

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#### **MUSEO DELL'OPERA DEL DUOMO**

When Santa Maria del Fiore—also known as Florence cathedral, or Il Duomo—was completed in the late 1400s along with its baptistery and bell tower, it was the largest church in Europe, and was decorated by some of Italy's most celebrated artists. But those master works that you see on the cathedral today, like Lorenzo Ghiberti's famous doors, or Gates of Paradise, which took him 27 years to finish, are fake, to save the original bronze from the elements. The doors and some of the other decorations and sculptures that once adorned the church are now housed in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo.

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#### **MUSEO SALVATORE FERRAGAMO**

You may think that you've died and gone to shoe heaven at this museum in a former palazzo that has been the former southern Italian-born shoe designer's workshop since 1938. The permanent collection from the brand's archives includes a Technicolor-and-gold wedge sandal that looks like it was designed with a Judy Garland “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” theme in mind for her in 1938, and a cross-strap ballet flat created for Audrey Hepburn's slim feet in the 1950s (which became one of the designer's signature styles and is still made today). Because of Ferragamo's status as a “creator to the stars,” the museum often runs temporary exhibits that merge history, film, art, and culture, with fashion history.

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#### **PALAZZO STROZZI**

Unlike city-run museums in Florence (such as Galleria degli Uffizi), Palazzo Strozzi is an independent foundation, meaning the exhibits here range from classic to avant-garde. On show could be a retrospective of cinquecento art in Florence, a 65-foot spiral tunnel for visitors called The Florence Experiment, or controversial performance artist Marina Abramovic's *The Cleaner*,

featuring live nude actors. There is also a permanent collection about the history of the palace, which was built for prominent Florentine banker, Filippo Strozzi, who died before it was completed.

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### **PALAZZO VECCHIO**

Also called Palazzo della Signoria, the monumental building surrounded by one of Italy's most famous piazzas has been home to Florence's city government since the Renaissance. Walk past a copy of Michelangelo's *David* at the entrance, and up opulent marble staircases to see expansive gold-highlighted and frescoed ceilings and walls. The Salone dei Cinquecento is one of the most grand, designed and painted by celebrated art historian (and artist in his own right), Giorgio Vasari.

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### **SANTA CROCE**

In Florence, churches are museums, too. At Santa Croce—considered the largest Franciscan church in the world (and said to be founded by St. Francis of Assisi)—you'll find 16 chapels that were once frequented by significant Florentine families who funded their decoration. There are frescoes by Renaissance master Giotto in the Bardi and Peruzzi chapels, and a terracotta altarpiece by another quattrocento heavy hitter, Andrea Della Robbia. If the art isn't enough of a draw to visit one of Florence's most significant churches, the basilica also holds the tombs of Michelangelo, Galileo, and Machiavelli.

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### **SANTA MARIA NOVELLA**

Dominican monks founded the basilica of Santa Maria Novella in the 13th century, making it one of the most religiously significant churches in Florence—and it still is. The facade is a beauty, with green and white marble inlay work by Genoa-born Leon Battista Alberti. Inside are some of the world's finest examples of Renaissance art. Masaccio's *Trinita* fresco, painted in the 1400s (which was covered and rediscovered in the 1800s), is on the main altar and is considered one of the earliest examples of perspective during the Renaissance. Giotto's *Crucifix* is another master work that was likely painted in the late 1200s. In the basilica's largest chapel, Tornabuoni, Ghirlandaio painted frescoes about the Virgin Mary's life (to whom the church is dedicated) in the late 1400s.

# What to Eat and Drink

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## TARTUFO

*Tartufo*, or truffles, multiply wild across Tuscany, making the pungent musky ingredient a popular topping shaved over pasta and added to sauces. White varieties are gathered by hunters from October to January and black ones are more prevalent from June until fall.

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## FETTUNTA

Accompanying almost any meal at restaurants across Tuscany are bread, extra virgin olive oil, and salt.

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## RIBOLLITA

*Ribollita* is a thick stew of simmered vegetables like kale and carrots, white beans, and bread

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## BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO

Brunello di Montalcino reds are produced in the hill town Montalcino in the Val d'Orcia Valley.

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## CECINA

You can grab a slice of this savory mixture of olive oil, salt, and chickpea flour for a snack at bakeries across Florence and Tuscany.

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## CASTAGNACCIO

Gluten-free travelers can feast on the chestnut flour dessert *castagnaccio*. This sweet is often baked in fall when chestnuts are most abundant, and combines the flour with pine nuts, sugar, and raisins, for a dense consistency.

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## CINGHIALE RAGÙ

Wild boar, or *cinghiale*, roam Tuscany, making it a common meat dish. It's rich and a bit gamey and is frequently prepared as a *ragù* (meat sauce) to top pappardelle, a flat and wide egg-based pasta with Tuscan origins.

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**PANZANELLA**

*Panzanella* is another result of cooks combining leftovers with fresh ingredients to create a meal or side. The aperitivo buffet staple is typically made from cubed bread, tomatoes, basil, and sometimes onions and cucumber.

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**PICCIONE**

*Piccione* (pigeon) is usually grilled or served as a ragù, and at Coquinarius, near the Duomo in Florence, it comes with spinach, pine nuts, and raisins.

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**PAPPA AL POMODORO**

*Pappa al pomodoro* combines tomatoes, basil, garlic, and olive oil, with bread.

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**BUDINO DI RISO**

Enjoy this tart-like pastry filled with vanilla-, orange-, or lemon-flavored rice pudding at many pasticcerie in Florence.

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**PAPPADELLE ALLA LEPRE**

A popular Tuscan meat is *lepre*: wild hare or rabbit.

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**CROSTINI DI FEGATINI**

*Crostini*—toasted pieces of bread with toppings—are an antipasti staple across Tuscany.

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**PICI**

The rounded, thick noodles resemble bulky spaghetti. Ask for *pici all'aglione*.

# WHAT'S WHERE



**1 Florence.** In the 15th century, Florence was at the center of the artistic revolution that would later be known as the Renaissance. Today, the Renaissance remains the main reason people come here—the abundance of art treasures is mind-boggling.

**2 Northwest Tuscany.** West of Florence the main attractions are Pisa, home

of the Leaning Tower, and Lucca, a town with a charming historic center.

**3 Central Tuscany.** The hills spreading south from Florence to Siena make up Chianti, a region of sublime wine and marvelous views. Siena, once Florence's main rival, remains one of Italy's most appealing medieval towns. To its northwest, little San Gimignano is famous for its 13th- and 14th-century towers. Farther west still is Volterra, a town dating back to the Etruscans.

**4 Eastern Tuscany.** Arezzo, Tuscany's third-largest city (after Florence and Pisa), has a car-free historic center and a basilica containing beautiful frescoes. Cortona, perched on a steep hill with sweeping views, exemplifies an alluringly old-fashioned way of life.

**5 Southern Tuscany.** In the Val d'Orcia the towns of Montalcino and Montepulciano are surrounded by some of Italy's finest vineyards, and Pienza is a unique example of Renaissance urban planning. Farther south is the Maremma, Tuscany's cattle-ranching country. Off the coast, the lush island of Elba is a popular resort destination.

**6 Umbria.** Like Tuscany, Umbria has beautiful rolling hills topped by attractive old towns. Perugia is Umbria's largest city, but it's far from overwhelming, and it has a well-preserved medieval core. In Assisi, birthplace of St. Francis, the grand basilica draws millions of pilgrims annually. Spoleto is a quiet, elegant hill town, but each summer it brims with activity during the Festival dei Due Mondi. To the east in the Marches region, Urbino is famed for its splendid Renaissance palace.



# Florence and Tuscany Today

## TAKING IT SWEET—AND SLOW

*La dolce vita* (“the sweet life”) is perhaps the reason visitors flock to Florence. *La dolce vita* translates loosely as sitting back and smelling the roses—maybe with a glass of wine in hand while admiring the view.

Life in Florence remains largely what it was centuries ago. Old-city skylines still look as good as they used to, as do views of the surrounding hills. In Tuscany, silver-gray olive trees dot the landscape, which is divided by rows of tall, noble cypresses.

The pace of life remains unchanged, too. When they are not in their cars or on their Vespa scooters, Florentines still prefer to move to a more leisurely drumbeat. It’s not just that the population is aging; it’s that they don’t like to appear rushed. And so natives make a point of stopping to greet acquaintances, comment on the latest news, or catch up on gossip. Even the waiters take their time, and you should be grateful to them for it. After all, why rush a meal with food that’s this good, wine this divine?

In Florence, when the going gets tough, the food gets *slower*. Keep an eye out for local food purveyors and restaurants displaying the Slow Food emblem, which is a snail. (You’ll see the sticker prominently displayed in any Slow Food establishment.) These remain the standard-setters for regional and seasonal specialties at reasonable prices. The Slow Food movement was actually born in northern Italy and promotes seasonal cuisine that doesn’t harm the environment, animal welfare, or consumers’ health. The term is meant to stand in stark contrast to the notion of “fast food” and represents the joys of living a slow-paced lifestyle, beginning at the table. Not all Slow Food is organic, but the movement does promote the principles behind organic agriculture. And remember, whenever you are where food is sold in Florence, even in the larger supermarkets, you never go wrong by inquiring as to what local specialties or seasonal excellences might be available. Most shopkeepers will appreciate your interest in what they are proudest to sell.

And let’s not forget the wine. In 2013, a new category of Chianti Classico

wine was created called “Gran Selezione.” Grapes can come only from the same estate, with a lengthy release date of nearly three years. It remains to be seen whether this will work; vintners are equally divided. In recent years, soaring temperatures have made for earlier harvests.

Because of phenomenally high temperatures in July and August, vintners in this part of the world are fairly confident that future wines might be beyond-stellar quality, equal to those exquisite 1997, 2001, and 2003 vintages. They may even surpass them.

### **THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE**

Immigrant populations in both Tuscany and Umbria continue to grow—predominantly Romanians and Albanians (roughly 20% each of the regions’ immigrants), as well as Chinese, Moroccans, Ukrainians, Filipinos, Egyptians, and sub-Saharan.

### **THE NEW UFFIZI**

Since 2007, the Uffizi, arguably the world’s greatest museum for Italian Renaissance art, has been steadily expanding with the ultimate goal of doubling its exhibition space. At this writing, there were 99 rooms in the Uffizi, though many of them are not always open. (Don’t worry: the A-listers are usually available.)

The expansion has been gradual and ongoing. In 2018, the rooms formerly known as Le Sale Blu (the Blue Rooms) became host to the Contini-Bonacossi collection (don’t miss Bernini’s sculpted “San Lorenzo”). That same year, the works of Leonardo da Vinci were finally given a glorious room of their own, and the works of Raphael were equally gifted. At this writing, additional openings of rooms was planned.


The Vasari Corridor, an enclosed elevated passageway connecting Palazzo Vecchio with Palazzo Pitti via the Uffizi Gallery, has also received considerable attention. In 2013, 127 additional artist self-portraits were added. Most are by 20th-century artists; Robert Rauschenberg’s X-ray skeletal structure might be the most interesting. The collection of self-portraits was formed by Cardinal Leopoldo de’Medici, brother of Grand Duke Ferdinand II. The first self-portraits were by Guercino and Pietro da

Cortona, two Baroque masters. But the earliest self-portrait dates from the beginning of the 14th century (it actually includes three members of the Gaddi family, all painters). At press time, the Corridor was closed indefinitely, and it is unclear if it will reopen; rumor is that it will sometime in 2020, but that the self-portraits will not be there, and that the Corridor will be used to connect the Uffizi with Palazzo Pitti (its original intention in 1565).

## **MUSEUM ADMISSIONS DEALS AND STEALS**

In autumn 2013, the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo shut its doors for a grand restructuring expected to last two years. It reopened in the autumn of 2015, in honor of Pope Francis's visit to Florence. This stunning museum houses objects (paintings, sculptures, liturgical objects, reliquaries, and parts of the original cathedral facade) from the Baptistery, Campanile (bell tower), and the cathedral itself.

In the meantime, a cumulative ticket has been created (called the Grand Museum of the Cathedral of Florence ticket), which allows access to the cathedral, Brunelleschi's dome, Giotto's bell tower, the Baptistery of San Giovanni, and the crypt of Santa Reparata. It's a great deal: the ticket costs €18 and is valid for three days once it's activated. This means that you can climb both the cupola (463 steps) and the bell tower (414 steps) with a break in between. It is necessary to book the cupola climb; in high season it's often fully booked for many days. Waiting in line to enter the cathedral has become "normal"—expect to wait up to an hour during high season, and remember to not wear shorts, and keep your shoulders covered (if you are female).

Serious museumgoers might want to invest €72 in the Firenze Card ( [www.firenzecard.it](http://www.firenzecard.it)). This card grants entrance to most major museums (including the Uffizi and the Galleria dell'Accademia) and allows you (sometimes, but mostly rarely) to skip the lines (in most cases; though on occasion museum staff won't allow it—especially at the Uffizi). In high season, this is a very good thing; Musei Statali (State Museums) have been overbooking many of their gems, which means that, even with a reservation, you don't sail in at the appointed time. Hour-long waits, even with a reservation, are not unheard of. A Firenze Card is good for 72 hours once it's activated, and also includes free bus and tram transportation.

## **FASTER THAN A SPEEDING BULLET**

High-speed train options—on the north–south Milan–Naples route as well as the east–west Venice–Bologna–Florence route—should continue to improve, thanks in part to the competition in this sector between state-owned railways and privately owned Italo trains. Keep your eyes out for round-trip travel specials resulting from ongoing price wars: there are real deals to be had for the first time in eons. Riding the high-speed train line from Turin to Lyon and Paris, meanwhile, will probably have to wait for the next edition of this book, as work on the Italian stretch is hotly contested by residents of the valleys through which the line would run.

Increased competition among high-speed train lines does not happen with local (regionali) commuter trains, because they are still a state-controlled monopoly. Expect delays, crowds, cancellations, faulty air-conditioning in summer, and trains that need renovating. Patience is a virtue. Remember that when there's a train strike, it is the commuter trains which are affected.

## **THE WALKING OF THE GREEN**

Meanwhile, visitors to Florence should be able to enjoy longer leisurely strolls and window-shopping in the expanded pedestrian-only area in the center of town, now including Florence's fashion High Street, *via Tornabuoni*, and the bridge across the Arno River at the southern end of this street, *Ponte Santa Trinita*.

In fact, at this writing, rumors were swirling in Florence that plans were advancing to ban cars altogether on this beautiful 13th-century bridge, which was dynamited by the Germans in 1944 and painstakingly rebuilt after the war's end. The newly installed bike lane would remain, which is good news for cyclists, as the lane is clearly marked and divided from pedestrians. It appears, however, that this was mere fantasy.

This green dream builds on the initiatives begun some years ago by then-Mayor Matteo Renzi, a then-young left-leaning politician who aspired to higher political office and is the former prime minister of Italy. He created a pedestrian-only zone around Piazza del Duomo, artfully dodging a political bullet while doing so, as well as around Palazzo Pitti.

## **What to Read and Watch Before Your Trip**

Gear up for your trip to Italy with these books and films that explore its culture, from historical novels and movies to contemporary actions flicks.

### ***THE AGONY AND THE ECSTASY BY IRVING STONE***

Michelangelo, one of the most prolific Italian Renaissance artists, and his inspired life, are the subject of Irving Stone's 784-page *The Agony and the Ecstasy*. Read about the artist's most celebrated works in sculpture, painting, and architecture—*David*, the Sistine Chapel ceiling, and the dome of St. Peter's basilica, and his love affairs, in this book that is long, but rightfully so.

### ***A ROOM WITH A VIEW***

Lucy Honeychurch and her cousin Charlotte Bartlett from Surrey, England, long for a "room with a view" for their holiday in Florence in the Academy Award-winning (Best Adapted Screenplay, Best Art Direction, and Best Costume Design in 1987) adaptation of an E.M. Forster novel. Piazza della Signoria and Florence's skyline have key scenes as Lucy meets George Emerson at his family's pensione, which leads to a scandalous kiss between Lucy and George that's seen by Charlotte. Lucy returns to England and gets engaged to another man while her connection with George stays strong.

### ***THE BIRTH OF VENUS BY SARAH DUNANT***

Sarah Dunant's protagonist, Alessandra Cecchi, is the 14-year-old daughter of a Florentine cloth merchant who falls for a painter while he is decorating the family palazzo's chapel. A writer of successful thrillers, Dunant weaves a portrait of opulent 15th-century Florence in her 412-page novel as young Alessandra is married off to a wealthy older man while pursuing her love for her family's artist, his work, and the city where she lives.

### ***THE CITY OF FLORENCE BY R.W.B. LEWIS***

American literary scholar R.W.B. Lewis lived in Florence for several decades before writing this historical account of what is considered to be the

birthplace of the Renaissance. The 320-page book examines the art, architecture, and history of the Tuscan city beginning from the Middle Ages, through its artists, political leaders, and major sights like the Arno River, Ponte Vecchio, and Duomo.

### **THE ITALIANS BY JOHN HOOPER**

A journalist who spent 15 years as a foreign correspondent in Rome for *The Economist*, *The Guardian*, and *The Observer*, shares Hooper's observations about Italy and its people. He uncovers the origins of its culture, character, food, and history from soccer to gnocchi to the Renaissance, with a generous *contorno* of humor.

### **LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL**

Roberto Benigni's Academy Award-winning film in Best Actor and Best Foreign Language film (1999), depicts the beauty and tragedy of life for Guido, Dora, and their young son Giosuè, in Italy during World War II. Guido (Benigni) is a fun-loving comic and the early parts of the film follow the family's joy-filled lives, much of which was shot in Cortona in Tuscany. When the family is separated and sent to a concentration camp, Guido's humor shields his son, by explaining the rules of the camp as a game to be won all the way to the end of film.

### **PBS EMPIRES SEASON 4: THE MEDICI**

The public television station's *Empires* historical miniseries (which examines empires including Rome, Egypt's Golden Empire, and Japan), focuses on Florence's Medici Dynasty for its fourth season. It begins with the rise of Medici wealth in the 1400s, then continues with murder and intrigue. Michelangelo makes an appearance, and the story then follows a young Cosimo de'Medici taking over as Duke of Florence when his cousin is murdered.

### **QUANTUM OF SOLACE**

A car chase at the beginning of *Quantum of Solace* (the 22nd James Bond film, starring Daniel Craig), leads Bond, James Bond, to a dramatic near end in Carrara (where marble was sourced for Michelangelo's *David*) until

reaching safety via a tunnel in Siena. Bond then continues his missions to thwart an assassination attempt against M (his boss and head of the Secret Intelligence Service), uncover who blackmailed his love, and foil a plot by villain Dominic Greene to monopolize natural resources in Bolivia. Later in another chase scene, Bond sprints among spectators who've filled Siena's Piazza del Campo for the Palio horse race, and then leaps and bounds across the city's terracotta-tile rooftops and terraces.

### ***STEALING BEAUTY***

Liv Tyler (in one of her first major roles) as Lucy Harmon is the star of Italian director and screenwriter Bernardo Bertolucci's 1996 film, set in the Tuscan countryside. Lucy is a teenager who is sent to spend the summer at a family friend's Tuscan farmhouse after the death of her mother. She hopes that she'll see a young man who she fell in love with four years earlier, and meanwhile is seduced by another guest at the house through the groups' lively Italian dinners and parties.

### ***UNDER THE TUSCAN SUN BY FRANCES MAYES***

When fortysomething writer Frances Mayes's marriage fell apart, she took a vacation to Tuscany to change her perspective. That trip led her to buy and remodel decrepit Villa Bramasole in Cortona, 65 miles northeast of Florence. The novel, which is also a film, is Mayes's exploration of Tuscany through its local markets, people, and the discoveries she finds while unearthing decades' worth of history in her villa and the fertile land that surrounds it.





## Chapter 2

# TRAVEL SMART FLORENCE & TUSCANY

Updated by  
Patricia Rucidlo

★ <b>CAPITAL:</b> Florence	⚠ <b>EMERGENCIES:</b> 115	🌐 <b>WEB RESOURCES:</b> <a href="http://www.italia.it">www.italia.it</a> , <a href="http://www.visittuscany.com">www.visittuscany.com</a> , <a href="http://www.firenzeturismo.it">www.firenzeturismo.it</a>
👤 <b>POPULATION:</b> 3.742 million	🚗 <b>DRIVING:</b> On the right	
🗨 <b>LANGUAGE:</b> Italian	⚡ <b>ELECTRICITY:</b> 200v/50 cycles; electrical plugs have two round prongs	
€ <b>CURRENCY:</b> Euro	🕒 <b>TIME:</b> Six hours ahead of New York	
🇮🇹 <b>COUNTRY CODE:</b> 39		



The map shows Italy with Northern Italy highlighted in blue and Tuscany in orange. Major cities are marked with circles: Turin, Milan, Verona, Venice, Bologna, Ravenna, Ancona, Pescara, L'Aquila, Rome, Perugia, Siena, Arezzo, Livorno, Pisa, and Genoa. The Tyrrhenian Sea is to the west and the Adriatic Sea is to the east.

# Know Before You Go

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## **SOCIAL ETIQUETTE IS A LITTLE MORE FORMAL IN TUSCANY AND UMBRIA**

Upon meeting and departing in Tuscany and Umbria, both friends and strangers wish each other good day or good evening (*buon giorno, buona sera*); *ciao* isn't used between strangers. "Please" is *per favore*, "thank you" is *grazie*, and "you're welcome" is *prego*. When meeting, strangers will shake hands. Italians who are friends greet each other with a kiss, usually first on the left cheek, and then on the right.

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## **COVER UP IN CHURCHES AND MONASTERIES**

Italy is full of churches, and many of them contain significant works of art. They are places of worship, so care should be taken to dress appropriately. Shorts, miniskirts, tank tops, spaghetti straps, and sleeveless garments are taboo; short shorts are inappropriate anywhere. When touring churches—especially in summer when it's hot and no sleeves are desirable—carry a sweater, large scarf, or a light shawl to wrap around your shoulders before entering the church, and always remember to take off your hat. Do not enter a church with food, and don't drink from your water bottle while inside. If a service is in progress, don't go inside. And turn your cell phone off before entering.

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## **TABLE MANNERS**

Table manners are formal; rarely do Italians share food from their plates. Flowers, dessert (in the form of a cake or torte from a pasticceria), or a bottle of wine are appropriate hostess gifts when invited to dinner. Spaghetti should be eaten with a fork only, although a little help from a spoon won't horrify locals the way cutting spaghetti into little pieces might.

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## **DOGGY BAGS ARE REALLY ONLY FOR DOGS**

Wiping your bowl clean with a small piece of bread is considered a sign of appreciation, and not bad manners. Don't ask for a doggy bag unless you

really have a dog.

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#### **ITALIANS DON'T DRINK CAPPUCCINO AFTER BREAKFAST**

Instead of cappuccino, you'll fit in if you drink espresso throughout the day, usually standing up and as a shot (it's not to be sipped on). During a meal, order your espresso after dessert, not with it.

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#### **SAVE MONEY ON TRAIN FARE**

If you're traveling only in Tuscany and Umbria, rail passes won't save you money. If Italy is your only destination in Europe, consider purchasing a Eurail Italy Pass, which allows a limited number of travel days within one month. Four days of travel cost about €203 (first class) or about €153 (second class); for further details, access Eurail's website. Note that you must purchase your Eurail Italy Pass before arriving in Italy. Don't assume that a rail pass guarantees a seat on the trains you wish to ride; you need to reserve seats ahead even if you use a rail pass. There's a nominal fee (usually €5) for the reservation.

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#### **FARMSTAYS ARE A POPULAR LODGING OPTION**

Rural accommodations in the *agriturismo* (agricultural tourism) category are increasingly popular with both Italians and visitors—you stay on a working farm or vineyard. Accommodations vary in size and range from luxury apartments, farmhouses, and villas to very basic facilities. Agriturismo has compiled *Agriturismo*, which is available only in Italian but includes more than 1,600 farms in Italy; pictures and the use of international symbols to describe facilities make the guide a good tool. Local APT tourist offices also have information.

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#### **ORDER TWO COURSES**

The crucial rule of restaurant dining is that you should order at least two courses. It's a common mistake for tourists to order only a *secondo*, thinking they're getting a "main course" complete with side dishes. What they usually wind up with is one lonely piece of meat. To round out the meal, order a *contorno*.

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#### **KEEP YOUR RECEIPT WITH YOU AFTER DINING**

When you leave a dining establishment, take your meal bill or receipt with

you; although not a common experience, the Italian finance (tax) police can approach you within 100 yards of the establishment at which you've eaten and ask for a receipt. If you don't have one, they can fine you and will fine the business owner for not providing the receipt. The measure is intended to prevent tax evasion; it's not necessary to show receipts when leaving Italy.

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#### **TRY AND LEARN THE LANGUAGE**

You need not strive for fluency; even just mastering a few basic words and terms is bound to make chatting with the locals more rewarding. In the main tourist cities, such as Florence, most hotels have English speakers at their reception desks, and you can always find someone who speaks at least a little English otherwise. Remember that the Italian language is pronounced exactly as it is written. You may run into a language barrier in the countryside, but a phrase book and the use of pantomime and expressive gestures will go a long way. Try to master a few phrases for daily use, and familiarize yourself with the terms you'll need for deciphering signs, menus, and museum labels.

# Getting Here

## d Air Travel

If you want to fly into Florence from the United States, you'll have to make connections in any number of major European cities (like Paris, Frankfurt, or London).

### AIRPORTS

The major gateways to Italy include Rome's Aeroporto Leonardo da Vinci (airport code FCO), better known as Fiumicino, and Milan's Aeroporto Malpensa (MIL). Flights to Florence make connections at Fiumicino, Malpensa, Paris, Amsterdam, Frankfurt, and London

Florence is served by Aeroporto A. Vespucci (FLR), also called Peretola, and by Aeroporto Galileo Galilei (PSA), which is about a mile outside the center of Pisa and about one hour from Florence.

Perugia is served by Aeroporto S. Egidio (PEG), a small airport that receives connecting flights from Milan's Malpensa airport and London's Stansted airport.

Italy's airports have restaurants, snack bars, and Wi-Fi access. Each airport has at least one nearby hotel—the city centers of Florence and Pisa are only 15 minutes away by taxi, so if you encounter a long delay, spend it in town.

Airports in Italy have been ramping up security measures, which include random baggage inspections and the presence of bomb-sniffing dogs.

■ **TIP** → Ask the local tourist board about hotel and local transportation packages that include tickets to major museum exhibits or other special events.

### GROUND TRANSPORTATION

It takes about 20 minutes to get from **Aeroporto A. Vespucci** into Florence. Taxis are readily available, charging about €25, with a €1 surcharge for each

bag and a €3 surcharge for nighttime trips. Outside the main terminal to the right is a bus stop where the SITA bus leaves every hour (from 5:30 am to 12:30 am) making its final stop at the main Florence train station (Santa Maria Novella)—a ticket costs €3 or €4. A tram line, inaugurated in 2018, connects the airport to the main train station at Santa Maria Novella.

Taxis from **Aeroporto Galileo Galilei** to central Pisa cost about €20. A train ride from Pisa to Florence takes just over an hour (€8.60). If you spend a little bit more, you can take a nonstop Pisa Centrale to Firenze Santa Maria Novella which costs €9.90. You can also reach Florence from the Pisa airport by taxi (about €200) or by bus—the Terravision service runs from the Pisa airport to the train station in Florence (70 minutes; one-way €4.99, round-trip €9.98).

The train from **Aeroporto Leonardo da Vinci** stops at five stations in Rome and takes one hour (cost: €14) to get to the city. A taxi from the airport to the central train station costs about €60.

Metered taxis are available outside both Arrivals and Departures areas of **Aeroporto Malpensa**. The journey time to central Milan is around 50 minutes; the taxi fare is anywhere from €75 to €90. The Malpensa Shuttle departs every half hour from the train station at Milano Centrale; it's €13 one-way and takes about an hour.

## **FLIGHTS**

### **TO FLORENCE, TUSCANY, AND UMBRIA**

Air travel to Italy is frequent and virtually problem-free (excepting frequently delayed luggage from Paris transfers). Sometimes, however, airport- or airline-related union strikes cause delays, which are usually announced in advance. Alitalia, Italy's national flag carrier, has the most nonstop flights to Rome and Milan. Frequent flights are available from the United States aboard Lufthansa, Air France, American, United, and Delta; these stop once in Europe before they or their code-sharing partners continue on to Florence or Pisa.

### **WITHIN ITALY**

Alitalia—in addition to other major European airlines and smaller, privately

run companies such as Ryanair, Meridiana, and Air One—has an extensive network of flights within Italy.

## l Boat and Ferry Travel

Ferries (*traghetti*) connect the mainland with the Tuscan islands, including Elba, Capraia, Pianosa, Giglio, and Giannutri. Hydrofoil (*aliscafo*) service goes to many destinations; it is generally twice as fast as the ferries—and double the price. All ferry service is considerably more frequent in summer.

Passenger and car ferries serve Elba. If you're traveling in July or August, try to make reservations at least a month in advance. Two ferry lines operate along the coast of Cinque Terre: Golfo Paradiso, which operates from June to September from Genoa and Camogli to the Cinque Terre villages of Monterosso al Mare and Vernazza; and the smaller, but more frequent, Golfo dei Poeti, which stops at each village (from Portovenere to Riomaggiore, except for Corniglia) four times a day.

The easiest place to find schedules and fare information for Tuscany ferry service is on each company's website. If you are already in the area, local tourist information offices, tourist agencies, and the ticket offices at the port have printed schedules. Most ferry operators accept credit cards or cash.

## j Bus Travel

Italy's bus network is extensive, but because of its low cost and convenience train travel is usually a more attractive option. Bus schedules are often drawn up with commuters and students in mind, and service may be sporadic on Sunday. That said, regional bus companies often provide the only means (not including car travel) of getting to out-of-the-way places. Even when this isn't the case, buses can be faster and more direct than local trains, so it's a good idea to compare bus and train schedules.

### CLASSES


Both public and private buses offer only one class of service. Cleanliness and comfort levels are high on private buses, which have comfortable seats, but

no toilets.

## CUTTING COSTS

Public bus lines offer student and monthly passes. Private lines offer one-, three-, and six-month passes. Children under 3 feet in height ride free if they're traveling with an adult and don't require their own seat. Infant car seats are permitted on private bus lines.

## DISCOUNT PASSES

None of the cities in Tuscany and Umbria are big enough to make the various discount bus pass schemes that appear and disappear with regularity worth the trouble. Most weeklong tourists to Florence, the largest city, will ride the city buses no more than four times at a cost of €1.20 per ticket. There is a 24-hour pass (€5), a three-day pass (€12), and seven-day pass (€18). A monthlong pass is available for €35. Students staying for a semester in Florence may wish to look into an ATAF Student Pass, a monthlong pass costing €23. See  [www.ataf.net](http://www.ataf.net) for information.


ATAF has an arrangement with Firenze City Sightseeing, a red open-top sightseeing bus in Florence. For €25 (€10 for children under 15) you can ride both it and all of the city buses for a 24-hour period, hopping on and off at your whim. Pisa also has a City SightSeeing hop-on, hop-off tour bus that runs from April to November (€15 adults/€5 children).

In Perugia the public bus system is operated by Bus Italia, with the fare of €1.50 for a 70-minute ticket.

## FARES AND SCHEDULES

You may purchase tickets for city buses with cash at newsstands or tobacco shops. The Florence public bus service ATAF allows customers to buy tickets, with a surcharge, in cash, on the bus from the driver—exact fare is necessary, as no change is given. You must validate the bus ticket in the machine on the bus. For private lines, tickets may be purchased with cash at the bus station or at travel agencies bearing the bus line's logo. Be sure to validate the ticket either at the bus station or on the bus as soon as you board. Bus schedules for private lines may be obtained online or at the bus station;



city bus schedules for Florence (ATAF) are available online at [www.ataf.net](http://www.ataf.net) .

## PAYING

Credit cards are generally not accepted for private-line bus tickets (some travel agencies may accept them), and public bus tickets purchased at newsstands and tobacco shops must be paid for in cash.

## RESERVATIONS

Public bus lines do not issue reservations. For some private bus line direct routes (i.e., during commute hours) reservations are required.

## k Car Travel

Tuscany and Umbria have an extensive network of *autostrade* (toll highways), complemented by (usually) well-maintained but free *superstrade* (expressways). The ticket you are issued upon entering an autostrada must be returned when you exit and pay the toll; on some shorter autostrade, mainly connecting highways, the toll is paid upon entering. Telepass, debit payment cards on sale at many autostrada locations, make paying tolls easier and faster by avoiding the hunt for change to pay the toll. A *raccordo* is a ring road surrounding a city. *Strade regionale* and *strade provinciale* (regional and provincial highways, denoted by S, SS, SR, or SP numbers) are usually two-lane roads, as are all secondary roads; directions and turnoffs on toll roads and expressways are frequent and clear; secondary roads aren't always clearly marked. Be prepared for fast and impatient fellow drivers.

## GASOLINE

Gas stations are located at frequent intervals along the main highways and autostrade. In case you run out of gas along the toll roads or the main free superstrade, emergency telephones are provided. To find the phone, look on the pavement at the shoulder of the highway where painted arrows and the term "SOS" point in the direction of the nearest phone.

Gas stations on autostrade are usually open 24 hours. Gas stations in towns

and cities are usually located on the periphery; they're rarely found in the city center. These stations are generally open Monday through Saturday 7–7 with a break at lunchtime.

Many stations have automatic self-service pumps that accept only bills of €5, €10, €20, and €50 and don't give change; if you want a receipt (*ricevuta*), you have to push a button before starting the process. Full-service stations or those with an attendant take both cash and credit cards. It's not customary to tip the attendant when full service is provided.

As of this writing, gas (*benzina*) costs about €1.50 a liter. It's available in unleaded (*verde*) and super unleaded (*super*). Many rental cars in Italy take only diesel (*gasolio*), which costs less per liter; ask about the fuel type before you leave the rental office.

## **PARKING**

Parking is at a premium in most towns and cities, but especially in the *centri storici* (historic centers), which are filled with narrow streets and restricted circulation zones. It's advisable to leave your car only in guarded parking areas. In Florence such indoor parking costs about €23–€30 for 12–24 hours; outside attended parking costs about €10–€20. Parking in an area signposted “zona disco” (disk zone), usually found only in small towns, is allowed for limited periods (from 30 minutes to two hours or more—the limit is posted); if you don't have the cardboard disk (located in the glove box of your rental car) to show what time you parked, you can use a piece of paper. The *parcometro*, the Italian version of metered parking in which you put coins into a machine for a stamped ticket that you leave on the dashboard, has been introduced in most large towns and cities.

Parking regulations are strictly enforced both in the cities and small towns. Fines run as high as €70 (more for taking a space designated for people with disabilities), and towing (or tire clamps) is a possible penalty in Florence. Car-rental companies often use your credit card to be reimbursed for any fines you incur during your rental period. In Tuscany and Umbria vandalism and theft of cars are rare. Nevertheless, don't leave luggage or valuables in your car, especially in cities and large towns where thieves target rental cars. Be especially vigilant at Autogrills (rest stops).

## ROAD CONDITIONS

Driving on the back roads of Tuscany and Umbria isn't difficult as long as you're on the alert for bicycles, scooters, and passing cars. In addition, street and road signs are often missing or placed in awkward spots, so a good map or GPS and patience are essential. Be aware that some maps may not use the *SR* or *SP* (*stradale regionale* and *stradale provinciale*) highway designations, which took the place of the old *SS* designations in 2004. They may use the old *SS* designation or no numbering at all. Autostrade are well maintained, as are most interregional highways. The condition of provincial (county) roads varies, but road maintenance at this level is generally good. In many small hill towns the streets are winding and extremely narrow; consider parking at the edge of town and exploring on foot.

Most autostrade have two lanes in both directions; the left lane is used only for passing. Italians drive fast and are impatient with those who don't, so tailgating is the norm here; the only way to avoid it is to get out of the way.

## ROAD MAPS

Michelin and Touring Club Italiano, which have shops in major Italian cities, both produce good road maps. The Michelin website ([www.viamichelin.com](http://www.viamichelin.com)) is a good source of driving instructions and maps. Do note their highly optimistic travel times. You can also get free street maps for most Tuscan and Umbrian towns at local information offices.

## RULES OF THE ROAD

Driving is on the right. Regulations largely resemble those in the United States, except that the police have the power to levy on-the-spot fines. In some Italian towns the use of the horn is forbidden in certain, if not all, areas; a large sign, "zona di silenzio" (silent zone), indicates where this is the case. Speed limits are 130 kph (80 mph) on autostrade and 70 kph (43 mph) on state and provincial roads, unless otherwise marked. Enforcement of speed limits varies from region to region. If you are driving on superstrade, pay particular attention to the gray machines that appear periodically along the road. They snap photos if you're exceeding the speed limit, and the rental-car company will eventually catch up with you to pay the fine. Stiff penalties include high fines and suspension of driving privileges. Penalties for driving

after drinking are heavy, too, including license suspension and the additional possibility of six months' imprisonment. The legal maximum blood-alcohol level is 0.05.

Right turns on red lights are forbidden. Headlights are required to be on day and night while driving on all roads (large or small) outside of municipalities. Seat belts are required for adults, and infant and children's car seats are compulsory for babies and toddlers.

## CAR RENTAL

When you reserve a car, ask about cancellation penalties, taxes, drop-off charges (if you're planning to pick up the car in one city and leave it in another), and surcharges (for being under or over a certain age, for additional drivers, or for driving across state or country borders or beyond a specific distance from your point of rental). All these things can add substantially to your costs. Request child car seats and extras, such as GPS, when you book. Rates are sometimes—but not always—better if you book in advance or reserve through a rental agency's website. There are other reasons to book ahead, though: for popular destinations, during busy times of the year, or to ensure that you get certain types of cars (vans, SUVs, exotic sports cars).

■ **TIP → Make sure that a confirmed reservation guarantees you a car. Agencies sometimes overbook, particularly for busy weekends and holiday periods.**

Florence, Tuscany, and Umbria have an intricate network of autostrade routes, good highways, and secondary roads, making renting a car a better but expensive alternative (because of high gas prices and freeway tolls) to public transportation. A rental car can be a good investment for carefree countryside rambles, offering time to explore more remote towns.

Having a car in major cities, however, often leads to parking and traffic headaches, plus the additional expense of garage and parking fees. In major cities, such as Florence, Siena, and Perugia, there are restricted zones for cars. They are called "Zona Traffico Limitato" (or ZTL) and are clearly marked; visitors often fail to see them. These areas are camera-monitored. If you drive to your hotel in the city center of these cities, inquire at the front desk of your hotel as to whether your rental car's license tag number must be

submitted by the hotel to the police or traffic authority. Failure to do this may result in a large fine being levied on your car-rental company and passed on to you.

Major car-rental companies offer Ford-type cars (such as the Ford Fusion) and Fiats in various sizes and in good condition, all with air-conditioning. The local rental companies provide good service and, depending on the time of year, may have greater availability than the well-known international companies. Because most Italian cars have standard transmissions, automatics are more expensive and must be reserved well in advance. Mileage is usually unlimited, although certain offers limit included mileage to 150 km (93 miles) a day, after which you must pay for additional miles.

Most major U.S. car-rental companies have offices or affiliates in Italy, but the rates are generally better if you make a reservation from abroad rather than from within Italy. Each company's rental prices are uniform throughout Italy, so you won't save money by, for example, picking up a vehicle from a city rental office rather than from an airport location.

In Italy a U.S. driver's license is acceptable to rent a car, but you might also want to consider getting an International Driver's Permit (IDP). Italy, by law at least, requires non-Europeans to carry an IDP along with their domestic license because the IDP states in Italian (and a dozen other languages) that your license is valid. In practice, it depends on the police officer who pulls you over whether you will be penalized for not carrying the IDP.

In Italy you must be 18 years old to drive a car. Most rental companies will not rent to someone under age 21, refuse to rent any car larger than an economy or subcompact car to anyone under age 23, and further require customers under age 23 to pay by credit card. Additional drivers must be identified in the contract and must meet age requirements. There may be an additional daily fee for more than one driver. Upon rental, all companies require credit cards as a warranty; to rent bigger cars (2,000 cc or more), you must often show two credit cards. There are no special restrictions on senior-citizen drivers. Book car seats, required for children under age three, in advance. The cost is generally about €36 for the duration of the rental.

Hiring a car with a driver can come in handy, particularly if you plan to do

some wine tasting. Ask at your hotel for recommended drivers, or inquire at the local tourist-information office. Typically, drivers are paid by the day, and are usually rewarded with a tip of about 15% on completion of the journey.

## **CAR-RENTAL INSURANCE**

Italy requires car-rental companies to include Collision Damage Waiver (CDW) coverage in quoted rates. Ask your rental company about other coverage when you reserve the car and/or pick it up.

Everyone who rents a car wonders whether the insurance that the rental companies offer is worth the expense. No one has a simple answer. It all depends on how much regular insurance you have, how comfortable you are with risk, and whether or not money is an issue.

## **Q Train Travel**

The fastest trains on the Ferrovie dello Stato (FS), the Italian State Railways, are the Eurostar trains, operating on several main lines, including Rome–Milan via Florence and Bologna. The high-speed Eurostar, called Alta Velocita, runs between Milan and Naples, stopping in Florence. Seat reservations are mandatory on Eurostar trains. Some Eurostar trains (the ETR 460 trains) have little aisle and luggage space (though there is a space near the door where you can put large bags). To avoid having to squeeze through narrow aisles, board only at your car (look for the number on the reservation ticket and match it to the number on the exterior of the car; it's usually on the door). The next-fastest trains are the Intercity (IC) trains, for which you pay a supplemental fee and seat reservations may be required (which is always advisable, especially during high season). *Interregionale* trains usually make more stops and are a little slower. *Regionale* and *locale* trains are the slowest and the most unpleasant—most cars are covered in graffiti, dirty, crowded, and geared to commuters. When train workers go on strike (which is often), the *regionali* trains are the ones that stop running. Italo, another line in direct competition with the Italian State Railways, runs high-speed trains to many major Italian cities.

There is refreshment service on all long-distance trains, with mobile carts and a cafeteria or dining car. Tap water on trains is not drinkable.

Traveling overnight can be efficient but it's not inexpensive (compared to the cost of a hotel room); never leave your belongings unattended (even for a minute), and make sure the door of your compartment is locked.

Train service between Milan, Florence, Rome, and Naples is frequent throughout the day. For the most part, trains stick to the schedule, although delays may occur during peak tourist season. Train strikes of various kinds are also frequent, so it's a good idea to make sure the train you want to take is in fact running: generally speaking, however, when train strikes happen high-speed trains are not affected.

The train from Rome to Florence takes 90 minutes; Rome to Perugia takes 2½ hours; Milan to Florence takes about 3 hours (it's another 2 hours by train from Florence to Perugia).

## CLASSES

Many Italian trains have first and second classes, but regional trains usually don't have first class. On interregional trains the higher first-class fare gets you little more than a clean doily (metaphorically speaking) on the headrest of your seat, but on long-distance trains you get wider seats, more legroom, and better ventilation and lighting. At peak travel times first-class train travel is worth the difference. One advantage of traveling first class is that the cars are almost always uncrowded—or, at the very least, less crowded than the second-class compartments. A first-class ticket, in Italian, is *prima classe*; second is *seconda classe*. Remember always to make seat reservations in advance, for either class, on Eurostar Intercity (IC), and Italo trains.

## FARES AND SCHEDULES

You can buy train tickets for nearby destinations (within a 200-km [124-mile] range) at newsstands or tobacconists (usually only those inside the station) and at ticket machines in stations, as well as at the ticket windows at the station or at travel agencies in town. You must specify the day you want to travel, and right before departure you must validate tickets in the red, silver, and green bullet-shaped machines which can usually be found at the foot of

many tracks. If you forget to stamp your ticket in the machine, or you didn't make it to the station in time to buy the ticket, you must immediately seek out a conductor. Don't wait for the conductor to find out that you're without a valid ticket (unless the train is overcrowded and walking becomes impossible), as he or she might charge you a hefty fine. However, you often can avoid getting fined if you immediately write the time, date, and name of the departure station on the back of the ticket and sign it—essentially “validating” it and making it unusable for another trip.

Kilometric tickets—tickets priced according to kilometer amounts instead of specific destinations—are sold at newsstands and can be a great time-saver if the line at the official ticket booth is too long (which it always is, especially during high season). Note, however, that you may have to round up amounts, and therefore pay more for your trip than if you purchased a destination-specific ticket. (For example, it's only 70 km [43 miles] from Florence to Pisa, but if the ticket amounts come only in 20-km [12-mile] denominations, you'd have to pay for an extra 10 km [6 miles].)

## **PAYING**

You can pay for destination-specific train tickets in cash or with any major credit card such as American Express, MasterCard, and Visa. Newsstands accept only cash for kilometric tickets.

## **RESERVATIONS**

Trains can be very crowded; it is always a good idea to make a reservation. In summer it's fairly common to stand for a good part of the journey, especially if you are coming off a cruise ship and heading to Florence. On the fast, direct Eurostar and Italo trains reservations are mandatory. To avoid long lines at station windows, buy tickets and make seat reservations up to two months in advance at travel agencies in Italy displaying the FS emblem or from a travel agent or website (🌐 [www.railpass.com](http://www.railpass.com)) before you leave home. Tickets can be purchased at the last minute, but seat reservations can be made only at agencies (or the train station) up until about three hours before the train departs from its city of origin. For trains that require a reservation (all Eurostar, some Intercity, and Italo, you may be able to get a seat assignment just before boarding the train; look for the conductor on the platform, but do



this only as a last resort. If you plan on traveling around August 15, make sure to book your tickets well in advance. Italians make a mass exodus to the sea or mountains, and sardine-like conditions prevail in many cases.

# Essentials

## h Accommodations

Florence, Tuscany, and Umbria have a varied and abundant number of hotels, B&Bs, *agriturismi* (farm stays), and rental properties. In both the cities and the country you can find very sophisticated, luxurious palaces and villas as well as rustic farmhouses and small hotels.

Throughout the region you'll find historic properties, such as 600-year-old palazzi and former monasteries, which have been restored as luxurious hotels while retaining their original mystique. On the other hand, modern Italian design has swept the world, and many boutique hotels in historic buildings have favored chic modern interior design. Increasingly, the famed Tuscan and Umbrian wineries are creating rooms and apartments for three-day to weeklong stays. Tuscan and Umbrian establishments are generally run with pride and are very clean. Although Italy has a star system for rating hotels, it is based on amenities provided and is not a definitive indication of an establishment's quality.

Most hotels and other lodgings require credit-card details before they will confirm your reservation. If you don't feel comfortable emailing this information, ask if you can fax it (some places even prefer faxes). However you book, get confirmation in writing and have a copy of it handy when you check in.

Be sure you understand the hotel's cancellation policy. Some places allow you to cancel without any kind of penalty—even if you prepaid to secure a discounted rate—if you cancel at least 24 hours in advance. Others require you to cancel a week in advance or penalize you the cost of one night. Small inns and B&Bs are most likely to require you to cancel far in advance.

Some hotels allow children under a certain age to stay in their parents' room at no extra charge, but others charge for them as extra adults; find out the cutoff age for discounts.

## **APARTMENT AND HOUSE RENTALS**

Italy gave birth to the Slow Food movement, and it appears to be at the start of the Slow Travel phenomenon also. More and more, travelers are turning away from the three-countries-in-two-weeks style of touring and choosing to spend a week in one city or a month in the countryside.

Often the most economical way to spend time in one place is to rent an apartment, a farmhouse, or a villa, even if you're traveling alone or with one other person.

These are readily available in Tuscany and Umbria. Most are owned by individuals and managed by rental agents who advertise available properties on the Internet. Many properties are represented by more than one rental agent, and thus the same property is frequently renamed ("Chianti Bella Vista" and "Tuscan Sun Home" and "Casa Toscana Sole" are all names of the same farmhouse) on various online rental sites. The rental agent may meet you at the property for the initial check-in, or the owner may be present, with the rental agent handling only the online reservation and financial arrangements.

Things to inquire about when renting an apartment in a city or town include: the type of neighborhood (ask about street noise, safety, and general ambience), the availability of an elevator or the number of stairs you'll have to climb, the available furnishings (including pots and pans and linens), where the nearest grocery store is, and the cost of utilities (included in the rental cost or not?). Inquiries about countryside properties should include all of that information plus an idea of how isolated the property is—do you have to drive for 45 minutes to reach the nearest town?


## **BED-AND-BREAKFASTS**

You can find cozy B&Bs in Florence, Perugia, Assisi, and Siena, as well as in more rural areas. In towns and villages B&Bs tend to be personal, homey, simple, and clean. In the Tuscan countryside you can find private villas that offer B&B accommodations; many are very upscale.

## **CONVENTS AND MONASTERIES**

Throughout Tuscany and Umbria tourists looking for lodging at a reasonable

price seek out convents, monasteries, and religious houses. Religious orders usually charge €30–€60 per person per night for rooms that are clean, comfortable, and convenient. Most have private bathrooms; spacious lounge areas and secluded gardens or terraces are standard features. A Continental breakfast ordinarily comes with the room. Sometimes, for an extra fee, family-style lunches and dinners are available.

Be aware of three issues when considering a convent or monastery stay: most have a curfew of 11 pm or midnight; you need to book in advance, because they fill up quickly; and your best means of booking is usually email or fax—the person answering the phone may not speak English. For a list of convents in most cities in Tuscany and Umbria, go to  [www.hospites.it](http://www.hospites.it).

## HOTELS

Italian hotels are awarded stars (one to five) based on their facilities and services. Keep in mind, however, that these are general indications and that a charming three-star might make for a better stay than a more expensive four-star. In major cities room rates are on a par with other European capitals: five- and four-star rates can be downright extravagant. In those categories, ask for one of the better rooms, because the less desirable rooms—and there usually are some—don't give you what you're paying for. Even in some five- and four-star hotels, rooms may be very small by U.S. standards, and equally small bathrooms usually have showers rather than bathtubs. Hotels with three or more stars always have bathrooms in all rooms.

In all hotels a rate card inside the door of your room or inside the closet door tells you the maximum rate that can be legally charged for that particular room (rates in the same hotel may vary according to the location and type of room). On this card, breakfast and any other options must be listed separately. Any discrepancy between the basic room rate and that charged on your bill is cause for complaint to the manager and to the police.

High season in Italy, when rooms are at a premium, generally runs from Easter through the middle of June, from early September to the middle of October, and then for two weeks at Christmas. During low season and whenever a hotel isn't full, it's often possible to negotiate a discounted rate. Major cities have no official off-season as far as hotel rates go, but some

hotels do offer substantial discounts during the slower parts of the year and on weekends. Always inquire about special rates. Major cities have hotel-reservation service booths in train stations. It's always a good idea to confirm your reservation, dates, and rate by fax or email.

Although by law breakfast is supposed to be optional, most hotels quote room rates including breakfast. When you book a room, specifically ask whether the rate includes breakfast (*colazione*). The trick is to “offer” guests “complimentary” breakfast and have its cost built into the rate. However, it's encouraging to note that many of the hotels we recommend provide generous buffet breakfasts instead of simple “Continental” breakfasts. Remember, if the latter is the case, you can eat for less at the nearest coffee bar.

Hotels in the \$\$ and \$ categories may charge extra for air-conditioning. In older hotels the quality of the rooms may be very uneven; if you don't like the room you're given, request another. This applies to noise, too. Front rooms may be larger or have a view, but they also may have a lot of street noise. If you're a light sleeper, request a quiet room when making reservations. Rooms in lodgings listed *in this guide* have a shower and/or bath, unless noted otherwise. (All hotels listed have private bath unless otherwise noted.) Remember to specify whether you care to have a bath or shower—not all rooms have both.

## Customs and Duties

Travelers from the United States should experience little difficulty clearing customs at any airports in Italy.

Of goods obtained anywhere outside the EU, the allowances are (1) 200 cigarettes or 100 cigarillos (under 3 grams) or 50 cigars or 250 grams of tobacco; (2) 2 liters of still table wine or 1 liter of spirits over 22% volume; and (3) 50 milliliters of perfume and 250 milliliters of toilet water.

Of goods obtained (duty and tax paid) within another EU country, the allowances are (1) 800 cigarettes or 400 cigarillos (under 3 grams) or 200 cigars or 1 kilogram of tobacco; and (2) 90 liters of still table wine or 10 liters of spirits over 22% volume or 20 liters of spirits under 22% volume or 110 liters of beer.

There is no quarantine period in Italy, so it is possible to travel with Fido. Contact your nearest Italian consulate to find out what paperwork is needed for entry into Italy; generally, it is a certificate noting that the animal is healthy and up-to-date on its vaccinations. Keep in mind, however, that the United States has some stringent laws about reentry: pets must be free of all diseases, especially those communicable to humans, and they must be vaccinated against rabies at least 30 days before returning. This means that if you are in Italy for a short-term stay, you must find a veterinarian or have your pet vaccinated before departure. (This law does not apply to puppies less than three months old.) Pets should arrive at the point of entry with a statement, in English, attesting to this fact.

## I Dining

A meal in Tuscany and Umbria (and elsewhere in Italy) has traditionally consisted of five courses, and every menu you encounter will still be organized along this five-course plan: First up is the antipasto (appetizer), usually *affettati misto* consisting of cured meats, cheese, and crostini. Next to appear is the *primo*, usually pasta or soup, and after that the *secondo*, a meat or fish course with, perhaps, a *contorno* (vegetable dish) on the side. A simple *dolce* (dessert) rounds out the meal. This, you've probably noticed, is a lot of food. Italians have noticed this as well—a full, five-course meal is an indulgence usually reserved for special occasions. Instead, restaurant meals are a mix-and-match affair: you might order a primo and a secondo, or an antipasto and a primo, or a secondo and a contorno.

Not too long ago, *ristoranti* tended to be more elegant and expensive than *trattorie* and *osterie*, which serve traditional, home-style fare in an atmosphere to match. But the distinction has blurred considerably, and an osteria in the center of town might be far fancier (and pricier) than a ristorante across the street. Although most restaurants in Tuscany and Umbria serve traditional local cuisine, you can find Asian and Middle Eastern alternatives in Florence, Perugia, and other cities (though they are often pale imitations of what you would get in other American and European cities). Menus are posted outside most restaurants (in English in tourist areas); if not, you might step inside and ask to take a look at the menu (but don't ask for a

table unless you intend to stay).

Italians take their food as it is listed on the menu, never making special requests such as “dressing on the side” or “hold the olive oil.” If you have special dietary needs, however, make them known; they can usually be accommodated. Although mineral water makes its way to almost every table, you can order a carafe of tap water (*acqua di rubinetto* or *acqua semplice*) instead, but keep in mind that such behavior is sneered at by just about everyone, who all deem it *brutta figura* (bad form).

The handiest and least expensive places for a quick snack between sights are bars, cafés, and pizza *al taglio* (by the slice) spots. Bars in Italy are primarily places to get a coffee and a bite to eat, rather than drinking establishments. Most have a selection of panini, and sometimes you’ll find the very Roman *tramezzini* (sandwiches served on triangles of white bread). In larger cities, bars also serve prepared salads, fruit salads, and cold and hot pasta dishes. Most bars offer beer and a variety of alcohol, as well as wines by the glass. A café (*caffè* in Italian) is like a bar but usually with more tables. If you place your order at the counter, ask whether you can sit down: some places charge extra for table service. In self-service bars and caffè, cleaning up your table before you leave is considered good manners. Note that in some places you have to pay before you place an order and then show your *scontrino* (receipt) when you move to the counter. Pizza al taglio shops are easy to negotiate. They sell pizza by weight: just point out which kind you want and how much. Very few pizza al taglio shops have seats.

## MEALS AND MEALTIMES

The Italian breakfast (*la colazione*) is typically a cappuccino and a sweet roll (usually a brioche) served at the local bar. For lunch, Italians may eat a panino with a glass of wine while standing at a local bar. A more substantial lunch (*il pranzo*) consists of one or two courses at a trattoria. Dinner (*la cena*) is likely to be two or three courses at a restaurant or trattoria, or pizza and beer at a pizzeria.

Menus separate dishes into *antipasti* (starters), *primi piatti* (first courses), *secondi piatti* (second courses), *contorni* (side dishes), and *dolci* (desserts). At ristoranti, trattorie, and osterie, you’re generally expected to order at least

a two-course meal: a *primo* and a *secondo*; an antipasto followed by either primo or secondo; or, perhaps, a secondo and a dolce. Italian cuisine is still largely regional, so ask about the local specialties.

In an *enoteca* (wine bar) or pizzeria, it's not inappropriate to order one dish. An *enoteca* menu is often limited to a selection of cheeses, cured meats, salads, and desserts; if there's a kitchen, you may also find soups, pasta, meat, and fish. Most pizzerias don't offer just pizza, but also a variety of antipasti, salads, and simple pasta dishes, as well as dolce. Pizza at a caffè is to be avoided—it's usually frozen and reheated in a microwave oven.

Lunch is usually served from 12:30 to 2, and dinner from 7:30 to 9:30 or 10. *Enoteche* are open in the morning and late afternoon for a snack at the counter. Most pizzerias open at 7:30 pm and close around midnight or 1 am, or later in summer and on weekends. Most bars and caffè are open 7 am to 8 or 9 pm; a few stay open until midnight or so. A happy development is that many spots are now opening at 11 in the morning, and the kitchen stays open until 11 pm.

Unless otherwise noted, the restaurants listed here are open daily for lunch and dinner.

## **PAYING**

Major credit cards are widely accepted in Italian eating establishments, though cash is usually the preferred, and sometimes the only, means of payment—especially in small towns and rural areas. (More restaurants take Visa and MasterCard rather than American Express; Discover is virtually unheard of here.) When you've finished your meal and are ready to go, ask for the check (*il conto*); unless it's well past closing time, no waiter will put a bill on your table until you've requested it.

Prices for goods and services in Italy include tax. The price of fish dishes is often given by weight (before cooking), so the price you see on the menu is for 100 grams of fish, not for the whole dish. (An average fish portion is about 350 grams.) Tuscan *bistecca fiorentina* is also often priced by weight (usually by the kilogram [2.2 pounds]).

Most restaurants charge a separate “cover” charge per person, which, by law,



is listed on the menu as *pane e coperto* (or just *coperto*); this charge is not for the service. A charge for service (*servizio*) may be included either as part of the menu prices or the total bill; if it is, tipping is unnecessary. It is customary to leave a small tip (no more than 5% unless you are at a high falutin' restaurant) in appreciation of good service when the service charge is not included in the bill. Tips are always given in cash. At some places in Florence, if you pay by credit card the restaurant will automatically slap a 15% tip onto your bill, which means you should leave absolutely nothing on the table.

*For guidelines on tipping, see Tipping below.*

## **RESERVATIONS AND DRESS**

Reservations are always a good idea in restaurants and trattorie, especially on weekends, holidays, and high season. Book as far ahead as you can, and reconfirm as soon as you arrive in town. (Large parties should always call ahead to check the reservations policy; and should leave a 10% tip on the table if *servizio* is not included.)

Unless they're eating outdoors at a seaside resort and are perfectly tanned, Italian men never wear shorts or running shoes in a restaurant—no matter how humble—or in an enoteca. If you see people in shorts, you can be 100% sure that they are foreigners. The same “rules” apply to women's casual shorts, running shoes, plastic sandals, and clogs.

We mention dress only when men are required to wear a jacket and tie.

## **WINES, BEER, AND SPIRITS**

The grape has been cultivated in Italy since the time of the Etruscans, and Italians justifiably take pride in their local vintages. Though almost every region produces good-quality wine, Tuscany is one of the most renowned areas. Wine in Italy is considerably less expensive than almost anywhere else, so it's often affordable to order a bottle of wine at a restaurant rather than to stick with the house wine (which, nevertheless, is probably quite good). Many bars have their own *aperitivo della casa* (house aperitif); Italians are imaginative with their mixed drinks, so you may want to try one.

You may purchase beer, wine, and spirits in any bar, grocery store, or

enoteca, any day of the week. Italian and German beers are readily available, but they can be more expensive than wine.

There's no minimum drinking age in Italy. Italian children begin drinking wine mixed with water at mealtimes when they are teens (or thereabouts). Italians are seldom seen drunk in public, and public drinking, except in a bar or eating establishment, isn't considered acceptable behavior. Bars usually close by 8 pm; hotel and restaurant bars stay open until midnight. Brewpubs and discos serve until about 2 am.

## Z Health

The most common types of illnesses are caused by contaminated food and water. In Italy tap water is safe to drink, and eating out in Italy is perfectly safe. As in any part of the world, avoid fresh vegetables and fruits that you haven't washed or peeled yourself. If you have problems, mild cases of traveler's diarrhea may respond to Imodium (known generically as loperamide) or Pepto-Bismol. Be sure to drink plenty of fluids; if you can't keep fluids down, seek medical help immediately.

## 1 Money

As in most countries, prices vary from region to region and are a bit lower in the countryside than in cities. Umbria and the Marches offer good value for money. Admission to the Galleria degli Uffizi is €24. In low season, the ticket price is €16. (Surcharges for reservations and special exhibits may increase the ticket price, especially at the Accademia.) A movie ticket is €8.50. A taxi ride (1½ km [1 mile]) costs around €9.

Prices *throughout this guide* are given for adults, in euros. Substantially reduced fees are sometimes available for children, students, and senior citizens from the EU; citizens of non-EU countries rarely get discounts, but be sure to inquire before you purchase your tickets because this situation is constantly changing.

■ **TIP** → **Banks never have every foreign currency on hand, and it may**

**take as long as a week to order. If you're planning to exchange funds before leaving home, don't wait until the last minute.**

## **ATMS AND BANKS**

Your own bank may charge a fee for using ATMs abroad or charge for the cost of conversion from euros to dollars. Nevertheless, you'll usually get a better rate of exchange at an ATM than you will at a currency-exchange office or even when changing money inside a bank with a teller (and lately most banks are not offering this service). Extracting funds as you need them is also a safer option than carrying around a large amount of cash.

■ **TIP → PIN numbers with more than four digits are not recognized at ATMs in many countries. If yours has five or more, remember to change it before you leave. PIN numbers beginning with a 0 (zero) tend to be rejected in Italy.**

Fairly common in banks in large and small towns, as well as in airports and train stations, ATMs are the easiest way to get euros in Italy. All major banks are members of Cirrus and/or Plus. You usually won't find an ATM (*bancomat* in Italian) in hotels or grocery stores, however. Before you leave home, memorize your PIN in numbers, not letters, because ATM keypads in Italy frequently don't show letters. Check with your bank to confirm that you have an international PIN (*codice segreto*), to find out your maximum daily withdrawal allowance, and to learn what the bank fee is for withdrawing money.

## **CREDIT CARDS**

In Italy, Visa and MasterCard are preferred over American Express, but in tourist areas American Express is sometimes accepted. Although increasingly common, credit cards aren't accepted at all establishments, and some places require a minimum expenditure. If you want to pay with a card in a small hotel, store, or restaurant, it's a good idea to make your intentions known early on.

■ **TIP → Notify your credit-card companies of your travel plans before you leave home; the recent fraud-prevention programs frequently suspend a cardholder's credit when foreign activity is detected on the**

card.

## CURRENCY AND EXCHANGE

The euro is the main unit of currency in Italy, as well as in 16 other European countries. Under the euro system, there are eight coins: 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, and 50 *centesimi* (cents, at 100 centesimi to the euro), and 1 and 2 euros. There are seven notes: 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, and 500 euros.

■ **TIP** → Even if a currency-exchange booth has a sign promising no commission, rest assured that there's some kind of huge, hidden fee. And as for rates, you're almost always better off getting foreign currency at an ATM or exchanging money at a bank.

## g Packing

In summer, stick with light clothing, as things get steamy in June, July, and August, but throw in a sweater in case of cool evenings, especially if you're headed for the mountains and/or islands. Sunglasses, a hat, and sunblock are essential. In winter, bring a coat, gloves, hats, and scarves. Winter weather used to be generally milder than in the northern and central United States, but things have changed. It snows here, and it often gets quite cold. Take wools or flannel rather than sheer fabrics. Bring sturdy shoes for winter (boots would not be a bad idea) and comfortable walking shoes in any season.

As a rule, Italians are more particular about dress than Americans are. To their minds, shorts are for the beach or for hiking, not for urban settings. Men aren't required to wear ties or jackets in most places other than some of the grander hotel dining rooms and top-level restaurants, but they are expected to look reasonably sharp—and they do. Formal wear is the exception rather than the rule at the opera nowadays, though people in expensive seats usually do get dressed up.

Modesty of dress (no bare shoulders or knees) is expected of both men and women in all churches. For sightseeing, pack a pair of binoculars; they will help you get a good look at poorly lighted ceilings and domes.

## V Passports and Visas

You must have a valid passport for travel to Italy. U.S. citizens who plan to travel or live in Italy or the EU for longer than 90 days must acquire a valid visa from the Italian consulate serving their state before leaving the United States. Plan ahead, because the process of obtaining a visa will take at least 30 days and the Italian government does not accept visa applications submitted by visa expeditors.

■ **TIP** → Before your trip, make two copies of your passport's data page (one for someone at home and another for you to carry separately). Or scan the page and email it to someone at home and/or yourself.

## Z Safety

Don't wear an exterior money belt or a waist pack, both of which peg you as a tourist. If you carry a bag or camera, be absolutely sure it has straps; you should sling it across your body bandolier-style and adjust the height to hip level or higher. Always be astutely aware of pickpockets, especially when on city buses, when making your way through train corridors, and in busy piazzas.

Women traveling alone in Tuscany and Umbria encounter few special problems. Younger women have to put up with male attention, but it's rarely dangerous. Ignoring whistling and questions is a good way to get rid of unwanted attention; a firm *no, vai via* ("no, go away") sometimes works, too.

■ **TIP** → Distribute your cash, credit cards, IDs, and other valuables between a deep front pocket, an inside jacket or vest pocket, and a hidden money pouch. Don't reach for the money pouch once you're in public.

## Y Tipping

Italians tip—if they tip at all—in smaller amounts in smaller cities and towns. In restaurants in Tuscany and Umbria a service charge of 10% to 15%

sometimes appears on your check. It's not necessary to tip in addition to this amount. If service is not included, leave a tip of €2. No one tips in bars in Florence.

Tip checkroom attendants 50 European cents per person and restroom attendants 50 European cents (more in expensive hotels and restaurants). Italians rarely tip taxi drivers, which is not to say that you shouldn't do it. A tip of 10%, depending on the length of the journey, is appreciated. Railway and airport porters charge a fixed rate per bag. Tip an additional 5% if the porter is especially helpful. Give a barber €1–€1.50 and a hairdresser's assistant €1.50–€4 for a shampoo or cut.

On sightseeing tours, tip guides about €2 per person for a half-day group tour, more if they are very good. In museums and other sights where admission is free, a contribution (€1) is expected. Service-station attendants are tipped only for special services, for example, 50 European cents for checking your tires.

In hotels, give the *portiere* (conciierge) about 10% of his bill for services, or €2.50–€5 if he has been generally helpful. For two people in a double room, leave the chambermaid about €1 per day, or about €7 a week, in a moderately priced hotel; tip a minimum of €1 for valet or room service. Double amounts in expensive hotels. In very expensive hotels, tip doormen €1 for calling a cab and €1 for carrying bags to the check-in desk, bellhops €2–€4 for carrying your bags to the room, and €2–€3 for room service.

# Great Itineraries

## Great Itineraries in Central Italy

Visit central Italy for the great art, sumptuous countryside, and outstanding food and wine.

### **DAY 1: FLORENCE**

If you're coming in on an international flight, you'll probably settle in Florence in time for an afternoon stroll or siesta (depending on your jet-lag strategy) before dinner.

**Logistics:** On your flight in, read through the restaurant listings in this guide and begin anticipating the first dinner of your trip. Look for a place near your hotel, and when you arrive, reserve a table (or have your concierge do it for you). Making a meal the focus of your first day is a great way to ease into Italian life.

### **DAY 2: FLORENCE**

Begin your morning at the **Uffizi Gallery** (reserve your ticket in advance). The extensive collection will occupy much of your morning. Next, take in the neighboring **Piazza della Signoria**, one of Florence's most impressive squares, then head a few blocks north to the **Duomo**. There, check out Ghiberti's famous bronze doors on the **Battistero** (they're high-quality copies; the originals are in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo). Work up an appetite by climbing the 463 steps to the cupola of Brunelleschi's splendid cathedral dome, from which you'll experience a memorable view (remember to book in advance, especially during high season). Spend the afternoon relaxing, shopping, and wandering Florence's medieval streets; or, if you're up for a more involved journey, head out to **Fiesole** to experience the ancient amphitheater and beautiful views of the Tuscan countryside.

### **DAY 3: FLORENCE**

Keep the energy level up for your second full day in Florence, sticking with

art and architecture for the morning, trying to see most of the following: Michelangelo's *David* at the **Galleria dell'Accademia**, the **Medici Chapels**, the **Palazzo Pitti** and **Boboli Gardens**, and the churches of **Santa Maria Novella** and **Santa Croce**. If it's a clear day, spend the afternoon on a trip to **Piazzale Michelangelo**, high on a hill, for sweeping views of idyllic Florentine countryside. Given all the walking you've been doing, tonight would be a good night to recharge by trying the famed *bistecca alla fiorentina* (a grilled, very rare T-bone steak).

**Logistics:** You can get up to the Piazzale Michelangelo by taxi or by taking Bus No. 12 or 13 from the Lungarno. Otherwise, do your best to get around on foot; Florence is a brilliant city for walking.

#### **DAY 4: SAN GIMIGNANO**

Now that you've been appropriately introduced to the splendor of Renaissance Italy, it's time for a change of pace—and for a rental car, which will enable you to see the back roads of Tuscany and Umbria. After breakfast, pick up your car, fasten your seat belt and keep your lights on (even during the day), and take great care to attend to ZTLs (Zona Traffico Limitato—cross into one unwittingly, and you can expect huge fines to arrive at your doorstep many moons after your return), and head out. On a good day the lazy drive from Florence to **San Gimignano**, past vineyards and typical Tuscan landscapes, is truly spectacular. The first thing that will hit you when you arrive at the hill town of San Gimignano will be its multiple towers. The medieval skyscrapers of Italy were public displays of wealth and family power. And they provided sanctuary and security during times of civic strife, which was often. After finding your way to a hotel in the old town, set out on foot and check out the city's turrets and alleyways, doing your best to get away from the trinket shops, and later enjoying a leisurely dinner with the light but delicious local white wine, Vernaccia di San Gimignano.





**Logistics:** Once you navigate your way out of Florence (no easy task), San Gimignano is only 57 km (35 miles) to the southwest, so it's an easy drive; you could even take a detour on the SS222 (Strada Chiantigiana), stop at one of the Chianti wine towns, and visit a winery along the way.

## DAY 5: SIENA

In the morning, set out for nearby **Sienna**, which is known worldwide for its Palio, a horse-race competition among the 17 *contrade* (medieval neighborhoods) of the city. Siena is one of Tuscany's most impressive sights; however many tourists you have to bump elbows with, it's hard not to be blown away by the city's precious medieval streets and memorable fan-shape **Piazza del Campo**. Not to be missed while in town are the spectacular **Duomo**, the **Battistero**, and the **Spedale di Santa Maria della Scala**, an old hospital and hostel that now contains an underground archaeological museum.

**Logistics:** It's a short and pretty drive from San Gimignano to Siena, but once there, parking can be a challenge. Look for the *stadio* (soccer stadium), where there's a parking lot that often has space.

## **DAY 6: AREZZO/CORTONA**

Get an early start, because there's a lot to see today. From Siena you'll first head to **Arezzo**, home to the **Basilica di San Francesco**, which contains important frescoes by Piero della Francesca. Check out the **Piazza Grande** along with its beautiful Romanesque church of **Pieve di Santa Maria**. Try to do all of this before lunch, after which you'll head straight to **Cortona**. If Arezzo didn't capture your imagination, Cortona, whose origins date to the 5th century BC, will. Olive trees and vineyards give way to a medieval hill town with views over idyllic Tuscan countryside and Lake Trasimeno. Cortona is a town for walking and relaxing, not sightseeing, so enjoy yourself, wandering through the **Piazza della Repubblica** and **Piazza Signorelli**, perhaps doing a bit of shopping.

**Logistics:** Siena to Arezzo is 63 km (39 miles) on the E78. From Arezzo to Cortona, it's just 30 km (18 miles)—take S71.

## **DAY 7: ASSISI**

Today you'll cross over into Umbria, a region just as beautiful as Tuscany but still much less visited. Yet another impossibly beautiful hill town, **Assisi**, is the home of St. Francis and host to the many religious pilgrims who come to celebrate his legacy. Be prepared for the crowds. Upon arriving and checking into your lodging, head straight for the **Basilica di San Francesco**, which displays the tomb of St. Francis and unbelievable frescoes. From here take Via San Francesco to **Piazza del Comune** and see the **Tempio di Minerva** before a break for lunch. After lunch, see **San Rufino**, the town cathedral, and then go back through the piazza to Corso Mazzini and see **Santa Chiara**. If you're a true fan of the Franciscans, you could instead devote the afternoon to heading out 16 km (10 miles) to **Cannara**, where St. Francis delivered his sermon to the birds.

**Logistics:** From Cortona, take the S71 to the A1 autostrada toward Perugia. After about 40 km (24 miles), take the Assisi exit (E45), and it's another 14 km (8 miles) to Assisi.

## **DAY 8: SPOLETO**

This morning will take you from a small Umbrian hill town to a slightly bigger one: **Spoleto**, a walled city that's home to a world-renowned arts

festival each summer. But Spoleto needs no festival to be celebrated. Its **Duomo** is wonderful. Its fortress, **La Rocca**, is impressive. And the **Ponte delle Torri**, a 14th-century bridge that separates Spoleto from Monteluco, is a marvelous sight, traversing a gorge 260 feet below and built upon the foundations of a Roman aqueduct. See all these during the day, stopping for a light lunch of a *panino* (sandwich) or salad, saving your appetite for a serious last dinner in Italy: Umbrian cuisine is excellent everywhere, but Spoleto is a memorable culinary destination. Do your best to sample black truffles, a proud product of the region; they're delicious on pasta or meat.

**Logistics:** One school of thought would be to time your visit to Spoleto's world-renowned arts festival that runs from mid-June through mid-July. Another would be to do anything you can to avoid it. It all depends on your taste for big festivals and big crowds. The trip from Assisi to Spoleto is a pretty 47-km (29-mile) drive (S75 to S3) that should take you less than an hour.

## **DAY 9: SPOLETO/DEPARTURE**

It's a fair distance from Spoleto to the Florence airport, your point of departure. Depending on your comfort level with Italian driving, allow at least 2½ hours to reach Florence's airport.

**Logistics:** An alternative possibility would be to try to get a flight out of Perugia's tiny airport, which is a lot closer to Spoleto than Florence. It offers connections to Milan and Rome (Ciampino)—but not many. Otherwise, just get an early start and drive to Florence along the A1 autostrada.

### **An Itinerary Tip**

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This itinerary is extremely difficult to complete without a car. Driving is easy and often (but not always) relaxing in the region, whose roads can be winding but are generally wide, well kept, well marked, and not too crowded. If you absolutely don't want to drive, buses are the best way to go, but you'll often have to change buses in hubs like Florence, and it would be best to cut out some of the smaller Tuscan hill towns.

# Tours and Events

## GUIDED TOURS

Guided tours are a good option when you don't want to do it all yourself. You travel along with a group, stay in prebooked hotels, eat with your fellow travelers, and follow a schedule. But not all guided tours are an if-it's-Tuesday-this-must-be-Belgium experience. A knowledgeable guide can take you places that you might never discover on your own. Tours aren't for everyone, but they can be just the thing for trips to places where making travel arrangements is difficult or time-consuming. Whenever you book a guided tour, find out what's included and what isn't. A "land-only" tour includes all your travel in the destination, but not necessarily your flights to and from or even within it. Also, in most cases prices in tour brochures don't include fees and taxes. And remember that you'll be expected to tip your guide (in cash) at the end of the tour.

## SPECIAL-INTEREST TOURS

### ART

**Abercrombie & Kent.** ☎ 800/554-7016 🌐 [www.abercrombiekent.com](http://www.abercrombiekent.com).  
**Context Travel.** ☎ 800/691-6036 🌐 [www.contexttravel.com](http://www.contexttravel.com).

### BIKING

**Backroads.** ☎ 800/462-2848 🌐 [www.backroads.com](http://www.backroads.com). **Butterfield & Robinson.** ☎ 866/551-9090 🌐 [www.butterfield.com](http://www.butterfield.com). **Ciclismo Classico.** ☎ 800/866-7314 🌐 [www.ciclismoclassico.com](http://www.ciclismoclassico.com).

### CULINARY

**Divina Cucina.** 🌐 [www.divinacucina.com](http://www.divinacucina.com). **Faith Willinger.** 🌐 [www.faithwillinger.com](http://www.faithwillinger.com). **Taste Florence.** 🌐 [www.tasteflorence.com](http://www.tasteflorence.com). **Toscana Saporita.** 🌐 [www.toscanasaporita.com](http://www.toscanasaporita.com). **Tuscan Women Cook.** 🌐 [www.tuscanwomencook.com](http://www.tuscanwomencook.com).

### CULTURE

**Context Travel.** 🌐 [www.contexttravel.com](http://www.contexttravel.com). **Italian Connection.** 📞  
0932/231816 🌐 [www.italian-connection.com](http://www.italian-connection.com). **Travcoa.** 📞 800/9922003 🌐  
[www.travcoa.com](http://www.travcoa.com).

## HIKING

**Backroads.** 📞 800/462–2848 🌐 [www.backroads.com](http://www.backroads.com). **Country Walkers.** 📞  
800/234–6900 🌐 [www.countrywalkers.com](http://www.countrywalkers.com).

## WINE

**Cellar Tours.** 📞 310/496–8061 🌐 [www.cellartours.com](http://www.cellartours.com). **Food & Wine  
Trails.** 📞 800/367–5348 🌐 [www.foodandwinetrails.com](http://www.foodandwinetrails.com).

## FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

Celebrations can be serious business in Italy. From avant-garde musical performances to ribald street fairs, tremendous effort is expended to see that things are done right, with the pride of the community resting on the success of the event. The result is usually a great time for those who attend.

**Carnevale, Viareggio, Northwest Tuscany.** For the three weeks leading up to Lent, this coastal town does its own fanciful version of Mardi Gras.

**Palio, Siena, Central Tuscany.** Twice a year, on July 2 and August 16, Siena goes medieval with this bareback horse race around its main square.

**Festa dei Ceri, Gubbio, Northern Umbria.** Mid-May marks Gubbio's Festival of the Candles, highlighted by townsmen racing up a hill carrying three huge pillars—just as they've been doing every year since 1160.

**Festival dei Due Mondi, Spoleto, Southern Umbria.** Star performers from around the world flock to this Umbrian hill town every summer for two weeks to do their thing in piazzas and intimate theaters.

## Contacts

### d Air Travel

**AIRLINE SECURITY ISSUES** **Transportation Security Administration.**

🌐 [www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov).

**AIRPORT INFORMATION** **Aeroporto A. Vespucci** (*FLR, usually called Peretola*). ☎ 055/30615 🌐 [www.aeroporto.firenze.it](http://www.aeroporto.firenze.it). **Aeroporto di Perugia San Francesco d'Assisi** (*PEG*). ☎ 075/592141 🌐 [www.airport.umbria.it](http://www.airport.umbria.it). **Aeroporto Galileo Galilei** (*PSA*). ☎ 050/849300 🌐 [www.pisa-airport.com](http://www.pisa-airport.com). **Aeroporto Leonardo da Vinci** (*FCO, more commonly known as Fiumicino*). ☎ 06/65951 🌐 [www.adr.it](http://www.adr.it). **Aeroporto Malpensa** (*MIL*). ☎ 02/232323 🌐 [www.milanomalpensa-airport.com](http://www.milanomalpensa-airport.com).

**AIRLINE INFORMATION** **Air Italy.** ☎ 892928 in Italy 🌐 [www.airitaly.com](http://www.airitaly.com). **Alitalia.** ☎ 06/65649 🌐 [www.alitalia.com](http://www.alitalia.com). **American Airlines.** ☎ 800/433-7300 🌐 [www.americanairlines.it](http://www.americanairlines.it). **Delta Airlines.** ☎ 800/221-1212 for U.S. reservations 🌐 [www.delta.com](http://www.delta.com). **Ryanair.** 🌐 [www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com). **United Airlines.** ☎ 800/864-8331 for U.S. reservations, 800/538-2929 for international reservations 🌐 [www.united.com](http://www.united.com).

### l Boat and Ferry Travel

**INFORMATION** **Golfo dei Poeti.** ☎ 0187/732987 🌐 [www.navigazione-golfodeipoeti.it](http://www.navigazione-golfodeipoeti.it). **Golfo Paradiso.** ☎ 0185/772091 🌐 [www.golfoparadiso.it](http://www.golfoparadiso.it). **Moby Lines.** ☎ 199/303040 🌐 [www.moby.it](http://www.moby.it). **Toremar.** ☎ 199/117733 🌐 [www.toremar.it](http://www.toremar.it).

### j Bus Travel

**BUS INFORMATION** **ATAF.** ☎ 800/424500 🌐 [www.ataf.net](http://www.ataf.net). **Bus Italia.** ☒ Via Santa Caterina da Siena 17/r, Florence ☎ No phone 🌐 [www.fsbusitalia.it](http://www.fsbusitalia.it). **Firenze City SightSeeing.** 🌐 [www.visitacity.com](http://www.visitacity.com).

## X Embassies

**UNITED STATES EMBASSIES U.S. Consulate.** ✉ *Via Lungarno Vespucci 38, Florence* ☎ 055/266951 🌐 [florence.usconsulate.gov](http://florence.usconsulate.gov). **U.S. Embassy.** ✉ *Via Vittorio Veneto 121, Rome* ☎ 06/46741 🌐 [www.usembassy.gov](http://www.usembassy.gov).

## U Passports

**U.S. PASSPORT INFORMATION U.S. Department of State.** ☎ 877/487-2778 🌐 <https://travel.state.gov/passport>.

**U.S. PASSPORT EXPEDITERS American Passport Express.** ☎ 800/455-5166 🌐 [www.americanpassport.com](http://www.americanpassport.com). **Travel Document Systems.** ☎ 800/874-5100 🌐 [www.traveldocs.com](http://www.traveldocs.com).

## Q Train Travel

**INFORMATION AND PASSES Eurail Italy Pass.** ☎ 800/622-8600 🌐 [www.eurail.com](http://www.eurail.com). **RailPass.** ☎ 877/375-7245 🌐 [www.railpass.com](http://www.railpass.com).

**TRAIN INFORMATION Italo.** ☎ 892020 (fee) 🌐 [www.italotreno.it](http://www.italotreno.it). **Trenitalia.** ☎ 892021 in Italy (fee) 🌐 [www.trenitalia.com](http://www.trenitalia.com).

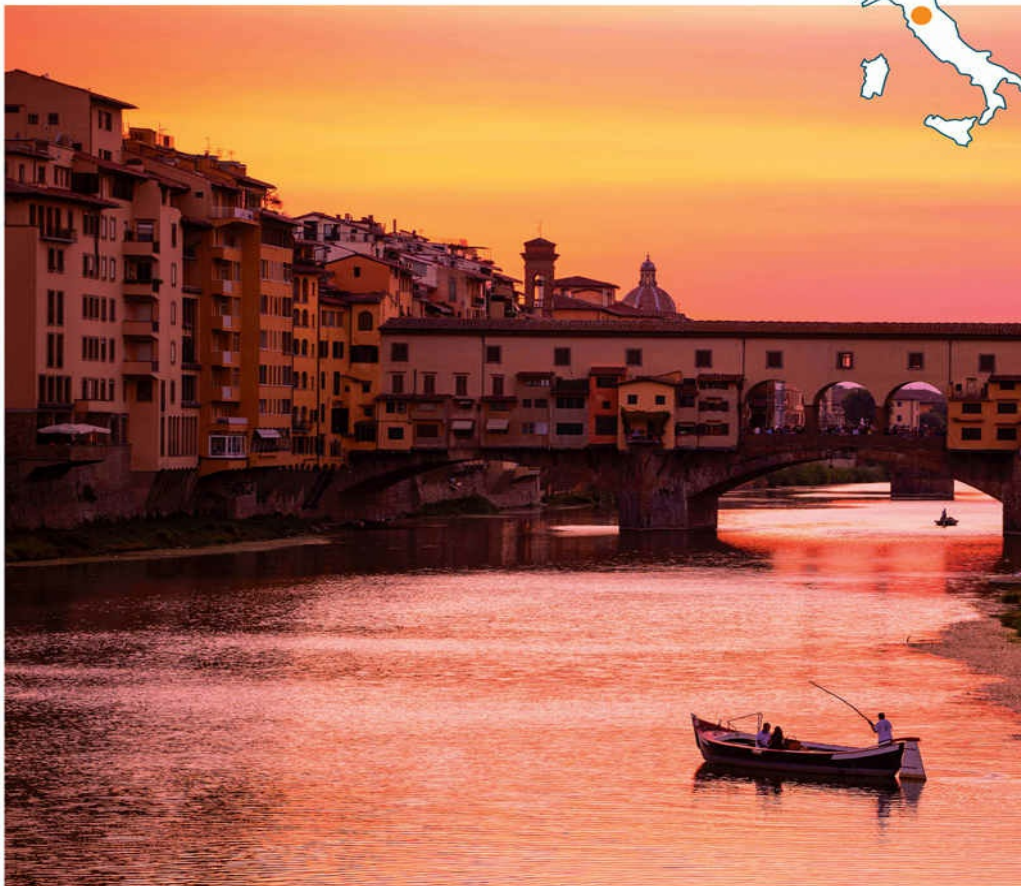




## Chapter 3

# FLORENCE

Updated by  
Patricia Rucido



 Sights  
★★★★★

 Restaurants  
★★★★★

 Hotels  
★★★★★

 Shopping  
★★★★★

 Nightlife  
★★★★☆

# WELCOME TO FLORENCE

## TOP REASONS TO GO

- ★ **Galleria degli Uffizi:** Italian Renaissance art doesn't get much better than this vast collection bequeathed to the city by the last Medici, Anna Maria Luisa.
- ★ **Brunelleschi's Dome:** His work of engineering genius is the city's undisputed centerpiece.
- ★ **Michelangelo's David:** One look and you'll know why this is one of the world's most famous sculptures.
- ★ **The view from Piazzale Michelangelo:** From this perch the city is laid out before you. The colors at sunset heighten the experience.
- ★ **Piazza Santa Croce:** After you've had your fill of Renaissance masterpieces, idle here and watch the world go by.



- 1 Around the Duomo.** The heart of Florence.
- 2 San Lorenzo.** See Michelangelo's masterful *David*.
- 3 Santa Maria Novella.** Visit 16th-century palaces and shop on Via Tornabuoni.
- 4 Santa Croce.** So called for its namesake basilica.
- 5 The Oltrarno.** Palazzo Pitti and the Santo Spirito neighborhood.

**Florence, the city of the lily, gave birth to the Renaissance and changed the way we see the world. For centuries it has captured the imaginations of travelers, who have come seeking rooms with views and phenomenal art. Florence's is a subtle beauty—its staid, unprepossessing palaces built in local stone are not showy, even though they are very large.**

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They take on a certain magnificence when day breaks and when the sun sets; their muted colors glow in this light. A walk along the Arno offers views that don't quit and haven't much changed in 700 years; navigating Piazza della Signoria, always packed with tourists, requires patience. There's a reason why everyone flocks here, however: it's the heart of the city, and home to the Uffizi, the world's finest repository of Italian Renaissance art. Florence was "discovered" in the 1700s by upper-class visitors from everywhere making the grand tour. Today millions of us follow in their footsteps. When the sun sets over the Arno and, as Mark Twain described it, "overwhelms Florence with tides of color that make all the sharp lines dim and faint and turn the solid city to a city of dreams," it's hard not to fall under the city's spell.

### **MAJOR REGIONS**

**Around the Duomo.** You're in the heart of Florence here. Among the numerous highlights are the city's greatest museum (the Uffizi) and arguably its most impressive square (Piazza della Signoria).

**San Lorenzo.** The blocks from the basilica of San Lorenzo to the Galleria dell'Accademia bear the imprints of the Medici and of Michelangelo, culminating in the latter's masterful *David*. The former convent of San Marco is an oasis of artistic treasures.

**Santa Maria Novella.** This part of town includes the train station, 16th-century palaces, and the city's most swank shopping street, Via Tornabuoni.

**Santa Croce.** The district centers on its namesake basilica, which is filled with the tombs of Renaissance (and other) luminaries. The area is also known for its leather shops.

**The Oltrarno.** Across the Arno you encounter the massive Palazzo Pitti and the narrow streets of the Santo Spirito neighborhood, filled with artisans' workshops and antiques stores.

# Planner

## Making the Most of Your Time

With some planning, you can see Florence's most famous sights in a couple of days. Start off at the city's most awe-inspiring architectural wonder, the **Duomo**, climbing to the top of the dome if you have the stamina (and are not claustrophobic: it gets a little tight going up and coming back down). On the same piazza, check out Ghiberti's bronze doors at the **Battistero**. (They're actually high-quality copies; the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo has the originals). Set aside the afternoon for the **Galleria degli Uffizi**, making sure to reserve tickets in advance.

On Day 2, visit Michelangelo's *David* in the **Galleria dell'Accademia**—reserve tickets here, too. Linger in **Piazza della Signoria**, Florence's central square, where a copy of *David* stands in the spot the original occupied for centuries, then head east a couple of blocks to **Santa Croce**, the city's most artistically rich church. Double back and walk across Florence's landmark bridge, the **Ponte Vecchio**.

But even after seeing those works, you'll have just scratched the surface. If you have more time, put the **Bargello**, the **Museo di San Marco**, and the **Cappelle Medicee** at the top of your list. When you're ready for an art break, stroll through the **Boboli Gardens** or explore Florence's lively shopping scene, from the food stalls of the **Mercato Centrale** to the chic boutiques of the **Via Tornabuoni**.

## Florentine Hours

Florence's sights keep tricky hours. Some are closed Wednesday, some Monday, some every other Monday. Quite a few shut their doors each day (or on most days) by 2 pm. Call ahead to confirm hours.

Here's a selection of major sights that might not be open when you'd expect (*consult the sight listings within this chapter for the full details*). Be aware that hours may change. On the first Sunday of the month all state museums

are free. That means that the Accademia and the Uffizi, among others, do not accept reservations.

The **Accademia** and the **Uffizi** are both closed Monday.

The **Bargello** closes at 1:50 pm, and is closed entirely on alternating Sundays and Mondays. However, it's often open much later during high season and when there's a special exhibition on.

The **Battistero** is open 8:15 to 10:15 and 11:15 until 8, Monday through Saturday, and Sunday from 8:30 to 2.


The **Cappelle Medicee** are closed alternating Sundays and Mondays (those Sundays and Mondays when the Bargello is open).

The **Duomo** closes at 5 daily except for Thursday when it closes at 4:30 and Saturday when it closes at 4:45. On Sunday it's open only from 1:30 to 4:45. The dome of the Duomo is closed Sunday.

**Museo di San Marco** closes at 1:50 weekdays but stays open until 7 weekends—except for alternating Sundays and Mondays, when it's closed entirely.

**Palazzo Medici-Riccardi** is closed Wednesday.

## Uffizi Reservations

At most times of day you'll see a line of people snaking around the Uffizi. They're waiting to buy tickets, and you don't want to be one of them. Instead, call ahead for a reservation (☎ 055/294883). You'll be given a reservation number and a time of admission—the sooner you call, the more time slots you'll have to choose from. Go to the museum's reservation door 10 minutes before the appointed hour, give the clerk your number, pick up your ticket, and go inside. (Often in high season there's at least a half-hour wait to pick up the tickets.) You'll pay €4 for this privilege, but it's money well spent. You can also book tickets online through the website  [www.polomuseale.firenze.it](http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it); the booking process takes some patience, but it works.

Use the same reservation service to book tickets for the Galleria

dell'Accademia, where lines rival those of the Uffizi. (Reservations can also be made for the Palazzo Pitti, the Bargello, and several other sights, but they usually aren't needed—although, lately, in summer, lines can be long at Palazzo Pitti.) An alternative strategy is to check with your hotel—many will handle reservations.

## Getting Here and Around

### AIR TRAVEL

#### Aeroporto A. Vespucci

Florence's small Aeroporto A. Vespucci, commonly called **Peretola**, is just outside of town and receives flights from Milan, Rome, London, and Paris. ✉ *10 km (6 miles) northwest of Florence, Florence* ☎ 055/30615 🌐 [www.aeroporto.firenze.it](http://www.aeroporto.firenze.it)

To get into the city center from the airport by car, take the autostrada A11. A SITA bus will take you directly from the airport to the center of town. Buy the tickets within the train station.

#### Aeroporto Galileo Galilei

Pisa's Aeroporto Galileo Galilei is the closest landing point with significant international service. If you are renting a car, it's a straight shot down the SS67 (aka the FI-PI-LI) to Florence. Take care on that dastardly road. A shuttle train service can take you from the airport to Pisa's main train station where all connections are possible. ✉ *12 km (7 miles) south of Pisa and 80 km (50 miles) west of Florence, Florence* ☎ 050/849300 🌐 [www.pisa-airport.com](http://www.pisa-airport.com)

### BIKE AND MOPED TRAVEL

Brave souls (cycling in Florence is difficult at best) may rent bicycles at easy-to-spot locations at Fortezza da Basso, the Stazione Centrale di Santa Maria Novella, and Piazza Pitti. Otherwise, try **Alinari** (✉ *Via San Zanobi 38/r, San Marco* ☎ 055/280500 🌐 [www.alinarirental.com](http://www.alinarirental.com)). You'll be up against hordes of tourists and those pesky *motorini* (mopeds). (For a safer ride, try Le Cascine, a former Medici hunting ground turned into a large public park with



paved pathways.) The historic center can be circumnavigated via bike paths lining the *viali*, the ring road surrounding the area. If you want to go native and rent a noisy Vespa (Italian for “wasp”) or other make of motorcycle or *motorino*, you can do so at **Massimo** (☒ *Via Campo d’Arrigo 16/r* ☎ 055/573689).

## BUS TRAVEL

Florence’s flat, compact city center is made for walking, but when your feet get weary you can use the efficient bus system, which includes small electric buses making the rounds in the center. Buses also climb to Piazzale Michelangelo and San Miniato south of the Arno.

Maps and timetables for local bus service are available for a small fee at the ATAF (Azienda Trasporti Area Fiorentina) booth next to the train station, or for free at visitor information offices. Tickets must be bought in advance from tobacco shops, newsstands, automatic ticket machines near main stops, or ATAF booths. The ticket must be canceled in the small validation machine immediately upon boarding.

You have several ticket options, all valid for one or more rides on all lines. A €1.20 ticket is good for one hour from the time it is first canceled. A multiple ticket—four tickets, each valid for 70 minutes—costs €4.50. A 24-hour tourist ticket costs €5. Two-, three-, and seven-day passes are also available.

Long-distance buses provide inexpensive service between Florence and other cities in Italy and Europe. **SITA** (☒ *Via Santa Caterina da Siena 17/r* ☎ 055/47821 🌐 [www.sitabus.it](http://www.sitabus.it)) is the major line.

## CAR TRAVEL

Florence is connected to the north and south of Italy by the Autostrada del Sole (A1). It takes about 1½ hours of driving on scenic roads to get to Bologna (although heavy truck traffic over the Apennines often makes for slower going), about 3 hours to Rome, and 3 to 3½ hours to Milan. The Tyrrhenian Coast is an hour west on the A11.

An automobile in Florence is a major liability. If your itinerary includes parts of Italy where you’ll want a car (such as Tuscany), pick the vehicle up on your way out of town.

## TAXI TRAVEL

Taxis usually wait at stands throughout the city (in front of the train station and in Piazza della Repubblica, for example), or you can call for one (☎ 055/4390 or 055/4242). The meter starts at €3.30 from any taxi stand; if you call Radio Dispatch (that means that a taxi comes to pick you up wherever it is you are), it starts at €5.40. Extra charges apply at night, on Sunday, for radio dispatch, and for luggage. Women out on the town after midnight seeking taxis are entitled to a 10% discount on the fare; you must, however, request it.

## TRAIN TRAVEL

Florence is on the principal Italian train route between most European capitals and Rome, and within Italy it is served frequently from Milan, Venice, and Rome by Intercity (IC) and nonstop Eurostar trains. Avoid trains that stop only at the Campo di Marte or Rifredi station, which are not convenient to the city center.

### Italo

This train line competes with the state-funded high-speed trains and connects Florence with Rome, Venice, and Milan (among other places). ✉ Florence ☎ 892020 🌐 [www.italotreno.it](http://www.italotreno.it).

### Stazione Centrale di Santa Maria Novella

Florence's main train station is in the center of town. ✉ Florence ☎ 892021 🌐 [www.trenitalia.com](http://www.trenitalia.com).

## Restaurants

Florence's popularity with tourists means that, unfortunately, there's a higher percentage of mediocre restaurants here than you'll find in most Italian towns (Venice, perhaps, might win the prize). Some restaurant owners cut corners and let standards slip, knowing that a customer today is unlikely to return tomorrow, regardless of the quality of the meal. So, if you're looking to eat well, it pays to do some research, starting with the recommendations here. Dining hours start at around 1 for lunch and 8 for dinner. Many of Florence's

restaurants are small, so reservations are a must. You can sample such specialties as creamy *fegatini* (a chicken-liver spread) and *ribollita* (minestrone thickened with bread and beans and swirled with extra-virgin olive oil) in a bustling, convivial trattoria, where you share long wooden tables set with paper place mats, or in an upscale *ristorante* with linen tablecloths and napkins.

Those with a sense of culinary adventure should not miss the tripe sandwich, served from stands throughout town. This Florentine favorite comes with a fragrant *salsa verde* (green sauce) or a piquant red hot sauce—or both. Follow the Florentines' lead and take a break at an *enoteca* (wine bar) during the day and discover some excellent Chiantis and Super Tuscans from small producers who rarely export.

International cuisine in Florence is a hit-or-miss affair. Although numerous Asian restaurants have sprung up since the 1990s, only a select few are worth a visit. Still, if you need a break from Italian, some relief is available.

Pizzas in Florence can't compete with their counterparts in Rome or Naples, but you can sample a few good approximations.

Cafés in Italy serve not only coffee concoctions and pastries but also sweets, drinks, and panini, and some have hot pasta and lunch dishes. They usually open from early in the morning to late at night, and are often closed Sunday.

## What It Costs In Euros

\$	\$\$	\$\$\$	\$\$\$\$
RESTAURANTS			
under €15	€15–€24	€25– €35	over €35

### Hotels

Florence is equipped with hotels for all budgets; for instance, you can find both budget and luxury hotels in the *centro storico* (historic center) and along the Arno. Florence has so many famous landmarks that it's not hard to find lodging with a panoramic view. The equivalent of the genteel *pensioni* of yesteryear can still be found, though they are now officially classified as hotels. Generally small and intimate, they often have a quaint appeal that usually doesn't preclude modern plumbing.

Florence's importance not only as a tourist city but also as a convention center and the site of the Pitti fashion collections guarantees a variety of accommodations. The high demand also means that reservations are a must, except for in winter.

If you find yourself in Florence with no reservations, go to **Consorzio ITA** (✉ *Stazione Centrale, Santa Maria Novella* ☎ 055/282893). You must go there in person to make a booking.

For expanded hotel reviews, visit [Fodors.com](http://Fodors.com).

## What It Costs In Euros

\$	\$\$	\$\$\$	\$\$\$\$
HOTELS			
under €125	€125– €200	€201– €300	over €300

### Nightlife

Florentines are rather proud of their nightlife options. Most bars now have some sort of happy hour, which usually lasts for many hours and often has snacks that can substitute for a light dinner. (Check whether the buffet is free or comes with the price of a drink.) Clubs typically don't open until very late in the evening, and don't get crowded until 1 or 2 in the morning.

## Performing Arts

Florence has a lively classical music scene. The internationally famous annual Maggio Musicale lights up the musical calendar in early spring, and continues throughout most of the rest of the year. Fans of rock, pop, and hip-hop might be somewhat surprised by the absence of live acts that make it to town (for such offerings, traveling to Rome or Milan is often a necessity). What it lacks in contemporary music, however, it makes up for with its many theatrical offerings.

### **La Nazione**

FILM | The daily Florentine newspaper *La Nazione* has movie listings. Note that most American films are dubbed into Italian rather than subtitled. ✉  
*Florence* 🌐 [www.lanazione.it](http://www.lanazione.it).

## **FESTIVALS AND SPECIAL EVENTS**

### **Festa di San Giovanni** (*Feast of St. John the Baptist*)

FESTIVALS | On June 24 Florence mostly grinds to a halt to celebrate the Festa di San Giovanni in honor of its patron saint. Many shops and bars close, and at night a fireworks display lights up the Arno and attracts thousands. ✉  
*Florence*.

### **Scoppio del Carro** (*Explosion of the Cart*)

FESTIVALS | On Easter Sunday Florentines and foreigners alike flock to the Piazza del Duomo to watch as the Scoppio del Carro, a monstrosity of a carriage pulled by two huge oxen decorated for the occasion, makes its way through the city center and ends up in the piazza. Through an elaborate wiring system, an object representing a dove is sent from inside the cathedral to the Baptistery across the way. The dove sets off an explosion of fireworks that come streaming from the carriage. You have to see it to believe it. ✉  
*Florence*.

## Shopping

Window-shopping in Florence is like visiting an enormous contemporary art gallery. Many of today's greatest Italian artists are fashion designers, and

most keep shops in Florence. Discerning shoppers may find bargains in the street markets. ■ **TIP** → **Do not buy any knockoff goods from any of the hawkers plying their fake Prada (or any other high-end designer) on the streets. It's illegal, and fines are astronomical if the police happen to catch you. (You pay the fine, not the vendor.)**

Shops are generally open 9 to 1 and 3:30 to 7:30, and are closed Sunday and Monday mornings most of the year. Summer (June to September) hours are usually 9 to 1 and 4 to 8, and some shops close Saturday afternoon instead of Monday morning. When looking for addresses, you'll see two color-coded numbering systems on each street. The red numbers are commercial addresses and are indicated, for example, as 31/r. The blue or black numbers are residential addresses. Most shops take major credit cards and ship purchases, but because of possible delays it's wise to take your purchases with you.

The usual fashion suspects—Prada, Gucci, Versace, to name but a few—all have shops in Florence. But if you want to buy Florentine in Florence, stick to Gucci, Pucci, and Ferragamo.

Bargains on Italian designer clothing can be found outside the city.

## SHOPPING DISTRICTS

Florence's most fashionable shops are concentrated in the center of town. The fanciest designer shops are mainly on **Via Tornabuoni** and **Via della Vigna Nuova**. The city's largest concentrations of antiques shops are on **Borgo Ognissanti** and the Oltrarno's **Via Maggio**. The **Ponte Vecchio** houses reputable but expensive jewelry shops, as it has since the 16th century. The area near **Santa Croce** is the heart of the leather merchants' district.

## Visitor Information

The Florence tourist office, known as the APT (☎ 055/290832 🌐 [www.firenzeturismo.it](http://www.firenzeturismo.it)), has branches next to the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi, across the street from Stazione di Santa Maria Novella (the main train station), and at the Bigallo, in Piazza del Duomo. The offices are generally

open from 9 in the morning until 7 in the evening. The multilingual staff will give you directions and the latest on happenings in the city. It's particularly worth a stop if you're interested in finding out about performing-arts events. The APT website provides information in both Italian and English.

## Around the Duomo

The heart of Florence, stretching from the Piazza del Duomo south to the Arno, is as dense with artistic treasures as any place in the world. Its churches, medieval towers, Renaissance palaces, and world-class museums and galleries contain some of the most outstanding achievements of Western art.

Much of the *centro storico* (historic center) is closed to automobile traffic, but you still must dodge mopeds, cyclists, and masses of fellow tourists as you walk the narrow streets, especially in the area bounded by the Duomo, Piazza della Signoria, Galleria degli Uffizi, and the Ponte Vecchio. Via dei Calzaiuoli, between Piazza del Duomo and Piazza della Signoria, is the city's favorite *passeggiata*.

## S Sights

### Badia Fiorentina

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | Originally endowed by Willa, Marquess of Tuscany, in 978, this ancient church is an interesting mélange of 13th-century, Renaissance, Baroque, and 18th-century architectural refurbishing. Its graceful bell tower, best seen from the interior courtyard, is beautiful for its unusual construction—a hexagonal tower built on a quadrangular base. The interior of the church (open Monday afternoon only) was half-heartedly remodeled in the Baroque style during the 17th century. Three tombs by Mino da Fiesole (circa 1430–84) line the walls, including the *monumento funebre di Conte Ugo* (tomb sculpture of Count Ugo), widely regarded as Mino's masterpiece. Executed in 1469–81, it shows Mino at his most lyrical: the faces seem to be lit from within—no small feat in marble. The best-known work of art here is the delicate *Vision of St. Bernard*, by Filippino Lippi (circa 1457–1504), on the left as you enter. The painting—one of Filippino's finest—is in superb condition; note the Virgin Mary's hands, perhaps the most beautifully rendered in the city. On the right side of the church, above the **cappella di San Mauro**, is a monumental organ dating from 1558. Constructed by



Onofrio Zeffirini da Cortona (1510–86), it's largely intact but is missing its 16th-century keyboard. ✉ *Via Dante Alighieri 1, Bargello* ☎ 055/264402 🌐 [www.jerusalem.cef.fr](http://www.jerusalem.cef.fr).

## **Bargello**

**JAIL** | This building started out as the headquarters for the Capitano del Popolo (Captain of the People) during the Middle Ages, and was later a prison. Today it houses the Museo Nazionale, home to what is probably the finest collection of Renaissance sculpture in Italy. Masterpieces by Michelangelo (1475–1564), Donatello (circa 1386–1466), and Benvenuto Cellini (1500–71) are remarkable; the works are distributed among an eclectic collection of arms, ceramics, and miniature bronzes, among other things. In 1401 Filippo Brunelleschi (1377–1446) and Lorenzo Ghiberti (circa 1378–1455) competed to earn the most prestigious commission of the day: the decoration of the north doors of the Baptistery in Piazza del Duomo. For the contest, each designed a bronze bas-relief panel depicting the sacrifice of Isaac; the panels are displayed together in the room devoted to the sculpture of Donatello, on the upper floor. According to Ghiberti, the judges chose him, though Brunelleschi maintained that they were both hired for the commission. See whom you believe after visiting. ✉ *Via del Proconsolo 4, Bargello* ☎ 055/294883 🌐 [www.polomuseale.firenze.it](http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it) 🏠 €9 🕒 Closed 1st, 3rd, 5th Mon. of month; closed 2nd and 4th Sun. of month.

## **Battistero (Baptistry)**

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | The octagonal Baptistery is one of the supreme monuments of the Italian Romanesque style and one of Florence's oldest structures. Local legend has it that it was once a Roman temple dedicated to Mars (it wasn't), and modern excavations suggest that its foundations date from the 1st century AD. The round Romanesque arches on the exterior date from the 11th century, and the interior dome mosaics from the beginning of the mid-13th century are justly renowned, but—glittering beauties though they are—they could never outshine the building's famed bronze Renaissance doors decorated with panels crafted by Lorenzo Ghiberti. These doors—or at least copies of them—on which Ghiberti worked most of his adult life (1403–52) are on the north and east sides of the Baptistery, and the Gothic panels on the south door were designed by Andrea Pisano (circa 1290–1348) in 1330.

Ghiberti's original doors were removed to protect them from the effects of pollution and acid rain and have been beautifully restored. Ghiberti's north doors depict scenes from the life of Christ; his later east doors (dating 1425–52), facing the Duomo facade, render scenes from the Old Testament. Both merit close examination, for they are very different in style and illustrate the artistic changes that marked the beginning of the Renaissance. Look at the far right panel of the middle row on the earlier (1403–24) north doors (*Jesus Calming the Waters*). Ghiberti here captured the chaos of a storm at sea with great skill and economy, but the artistic conventions he used are basically pre-Renaissance: Jesus is the most important figure, so he is the largest; the disciples are next in size, being next in importance; the ship on which they founder looks like a mere toy.

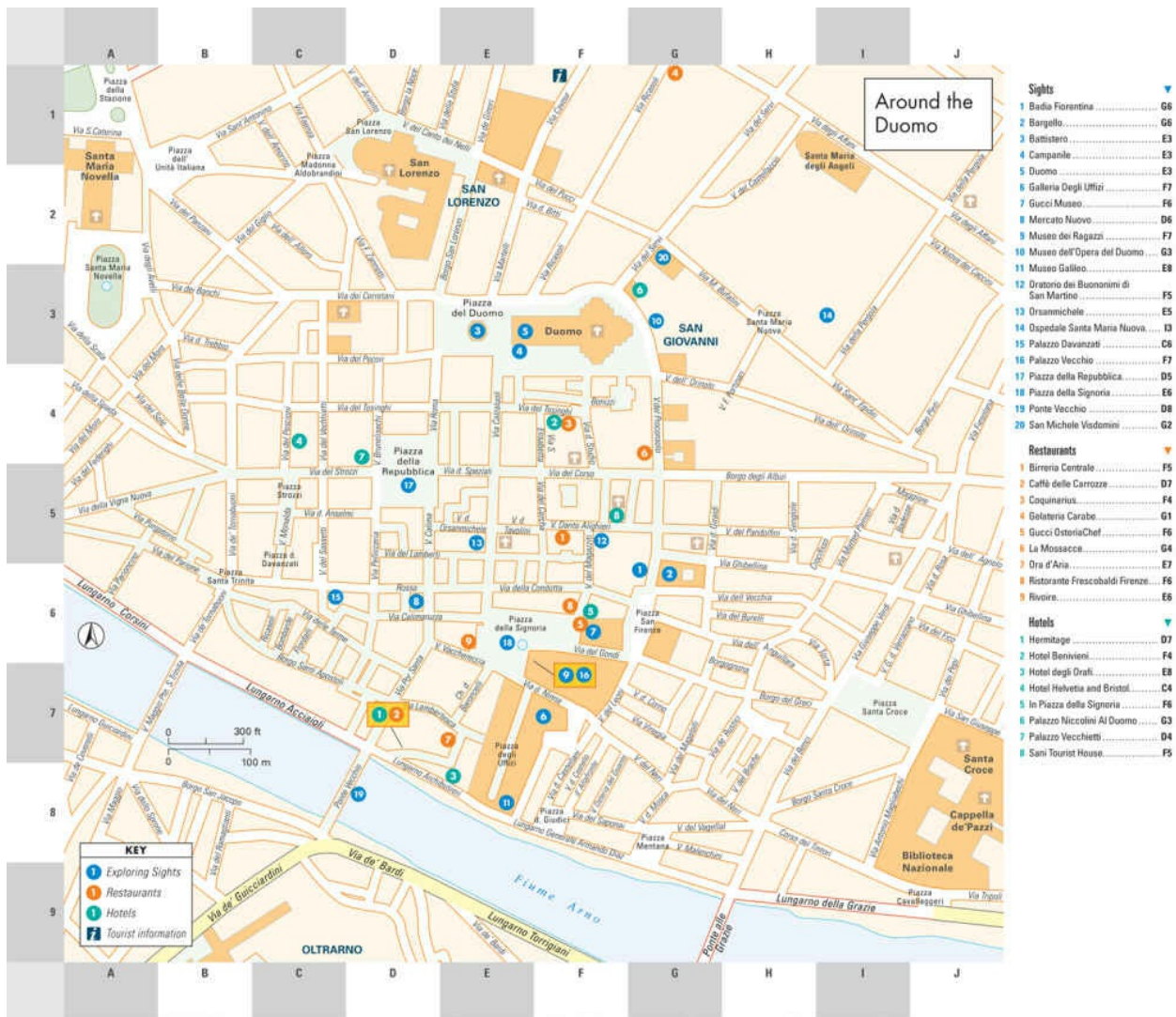
The exquisitely rendered panels on the east doors are larger, more expansive, more sweeping—and more convincing. The middle panel on the left-hand door tells the story of Jacob and Esau, and the various episodes of the story—the selling of the birthright, Isaac ordering Esau to go hunting, the blessing of Jacob, and so forth—have been merged into a single beautifully realized street scene. Ghiberti's use of perspective suggests depth: the background architecture looks far more credible than on the north-door panels, the figures in the foreground are grouped realistically, and the naturalism and grace of the poses (look at Esau's left leg and the dog next to him) have nothing to do with the sacred message being conveyed. Although the religious content remains, the figures and their place in the natural world are given new prominence, and are portrayed with a realism not seen in art since the fall of the Roman Empire nearly a thousand years before.

As a footnote to Ghiberti's panels, one small detail of the east doors is worth a special look. To the lower left of the Jacob and Esau panel, Ghiberti placed a tiny self-portrait bust. From either side, the portrait is extremely appealing—Ghiberti looks like everyone's favorite uncle—but the bust is carefully placed so that you can make direct eye contact with the tiny head from a single spot. When that contact is made, the impression of intelligent life—of *modern* intelligent life—is astonishing. It's no wonder that these doors received one of the most famous compliments in the history of art from an artist known to be notoriously stingy with praise: Michelangelo declared them so beautiful that they could serve as the Gates of Paradise. ☒ *Piazza del*

Duomo, Florence ☎ 055/2302885 🌐 [www.operaduomo.firenze.it](http://www.operaduomo.firenze.it) 🏠 €18.

## Campanile

**BUILDING** | The Gothic bell tower designed by Giotto (circa 1266–1337) is a soaring structure of multicolor marble originally decorated with sculptures by Donatello and reliefs by Giotto, Andrea Pisano, and others (which are now in the Museo dell’Opera del Duomo). A climb of 414 steps rewards you with a close-up of Brunelleschi’s cupola on the Duomo next door and a sweeping view of the city. ✉ *Piazza del Duomo, Florence* ☎ 055/2302885 🌐 [www.operaduomo.firenze.it](http://www.operaduomo.firenze.it) 🏠 €18.



## Florence Through the Ages S

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**Guelph vs. Ghibelline.** Although Florence can lay claim to a modest importance in the ancient world, it didn't come into its own until the Middle Ages. In the early 1200s the city, like most of the rest of Italy, was rent by civic unrest. Two factions, the Guelphs and the Ghibellines, competed for power. The Guelphs supported the papacy, and the Ghibellines supported the Holy Roman Empire. Bloody battles—most notably one at Montaperti in 1260—tore Florence and other Italian cities apart. By the end of the 13th century the Guelphs ruled securely, and the Ghibellines had been vanquished. This didn't end civic strife, however: the Guelphs split into the Whites and the Blacks for reasons still debated by historians. Dante, author of *The Divine Comedy*, was banished from Florence in 1301 because he was a White.

**The Guilded Age.** Local merchants had organized themselves into guilds by sometime beginning in the 12th century. In 1250, they proclaimed themselves the *primo popolo* (literally, “first people”), making a landmark attempt at elective, republican rule. Though the episode lasted only 10 years, it constituted a breakthrough in Western history. Such a daring stance by the merchant class was a by-product of Florence's emergence as an economic powerhouse. Florentines were papal bankers; they instituted the system of international letters of credit; the gold florin became the international standard of currency. With this economic strength came a building boom. Sculptors such as Ghiberti and Donatello decorated the new churches; painters such as Giotto and Masaccio frescoed their walls.

**Mighty Medici.** Though ostensibly a republic, Florence was blessed (or cursed) with one very powerful family, the Medici, who came to prominence in 1434 and were initially the de facto rulers and then the absolute rulers of Florence for several hundred years. It was under patriarch Cosimo il Vecchio (1389–1464) that the Medici's position in Florence was securely established. Florence's golden age occurred during the reign of his grandson Lorenzo de' Medici (1449–92). Lorenzo was not only an astute politician but also a highly educated man and a great patron of the arts. Called “Il Magnifico” (the Magnificent), he gathered around him poets, artists, philosophers, architects, and musicians.

Lorenzo's son Piero (1471–1503) proved inept at handling the city's affairs. He was run out of town in 1494, and Florence briefly enjoyed its status as a republic while dominated by the Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola (1452–98). After a decade of internal unrest, the republic

fell and the Medici returned to power, but Florence never regained its former prestige. By the 1530s most of the major artistic talent had left the city—Michelangelo, for one, had settled in Rome. The now-ineffectual Medici, eventually attaining the title of grand dukes, remained nominally in power until the line died out in 1737, after which time Florence passed from the Austrians to the French and back again until the unification of Italy (1865–70), when it briefly became the capital under King Vittorio Emanuele II.

### ★ **Duomo** (*Cattedrale di Santa Maria del Fiore*)

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | In 1296 Arnolfo di Cambio (circa 1245–circa 1310) was commissioned to build “the loftiest, most sumptuous edifice human invention could devise” in the Romanesque style on the site of the old church of Santa Reparata. The immense Duomo was consecrated in 1436, but work continued over the centuries. The imposing facade dates only from the 19th century; its neo-Gothic style somewhat complements Giotto’s genuine Gothic 14th-century campanile. The real glory of the Duomo, however, is Filippo Brunelleschi’s dome, presiding over the cathedral with a dignity and grace that few domes to this day can match. Brunelleschi’s **cupola** was an ingenious engineering feat. The space to be enclosed by the dome was so large and so high above the ground that traditional methods of dome construction—wooden centering and scaffolding—were of no use whatsoever. So Brunelleschi developed entirely new building methods, which he implemented with equipment of his own design (including a novel scaffolding method). Beginning work in 1420, he built not one dome but two, one inside the other, and connected them with ribbing that stretched across the intervening empty space, thereby considerably lessening the crushing weight of the structure. He also employed a new method of bricklaying, based on an ancient herringbone pattern, interlocking each course of bricks with the course below in a way that made the growing structure self-supporting. The result was one of the great engineering breakthroughs of all time: most of Europe’s later domes, including that of St. Peter’s in Rome, were built employing Brunelleschi’s methods, and today the Duomo has come to symbolize Florence in the same way that the Eiffel Tower symbolizes Paris. The Florentines are justly proud of it, and to this day the Florentine phrase for “homesick” is *nostalgia del cupolone* (homesick for the

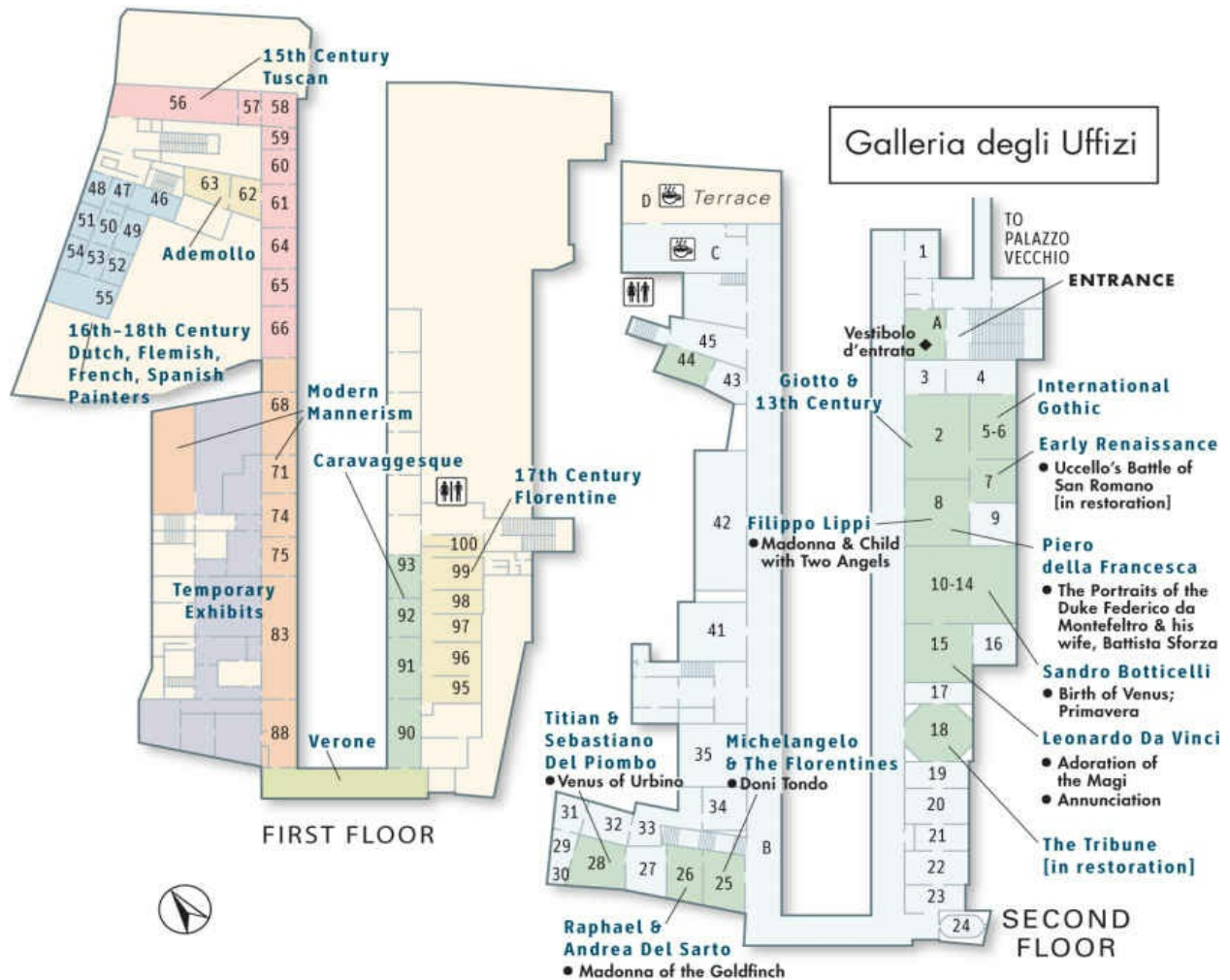
dome). The interior is a fine example of Florentine Gothic. Much of the cathedral's best-known art has been moved to the nearby Museo dell'Opera del Duomo. Notable among the works that remain, however, are two massive equestrian frescoes honoring famous soldiers: Niccolò da Tolentino, painted in 1456 by Andrea del Castagno (circa 1419–57), and Sir John Hawkwood, painted 20 years earlier by Paolo Uccello (1397–1475); both are on the left nave. A 1995 restoration repaired the dome and cleaned the vastly crowded fresco of the Last Judgment, executed by Giorgio Vasari (1511–74) and Zuccaro, on its interior. Originally Brunelleschi wanted mosaics to cover the interior of the great ribbed cupola, but by the time the Florentines got around to commissioning the decoration, 150 years later, tastes had changed. Too bad: it's a fairly dreadful Last Judgment and hardly worth the effort of craning your neck to see it. You can explore the upper and lower reaches of the cathedral. The remains of a Roman wall and an 11th-century cemetery have been excavated beneath the nave; the way down is near the first pier on the right. The **climb to the top of the dome** (463 steps) is not for the faint of heart, but the view is superb. ✉ *Piazza del Duomo, Florence* ☎ 055/2302885 🌐 [www.operaduomo.firenze.it](http://www.operaduomo.firenze.it) 🗳 *Church free, cumulative ticket including Baptistry, Crypt, Museo, Campanile, cupola* €15 🕒 *Closed Sun. morning.*

### ★ **Galleria degli Uffizi**

**MUSEUM** | The venerable Uffizi Gallery occupies two floors of the U-shape **Palazzo degli Uffizi**, designed by Giorgio Vasari (1511–74) in 1560 to hold the *uffici* (administrative offices) of the Medici Grand Duke Cosimo I (1519–74).

Among the highlights are Paolo Uccello's *Battle of San Romano*, its brutal chaos of lances one of the finest visual metaphors for warfare ever captured in paint (it returned from a glorious restoration in 2012); the *Madonna and Child with Two Angels*, by Fra Filippo Lippi (1406–69), in which the impudent eye contact established by the angel would have been unthinkable prior to the Renaissance; the *Birth of Venus* and *Primavera* by Sandro Botticelli (1445–1510), the goddess of the former seeming to float on air and the fairy-tale charm of the latter exhibiting the painter's idiosyncratic genius at its zenith; the portraits of the Renaissance duke Federico da Montefeltro and his wife Battista Sforza, by Piero della Francesca (circa 1420–92); the *Madonna of the Goldfinch* by Raphael (1483–1520), and check out the

brilliant blues that decorate the sky, as well as the eye contact between mother and child, both clearly anticipating the painful future; Michelangelo's *Doni Tondo*; the *Venus of Urbino* by Titian (circa 1488/90–1576); and the splendid *Bacchus* by Caravaggio (circa 1571/72–1610). In the last two works, the approaches to myth and sexuality are diametrically opposed (to put it mildly).



<b>First Floor Galleries</b> ▼	Titian ..... 83	Leonardo da Vinci ..... 15	<b>Corridors and statues</b> ▼
16th-18th Century Spanish painters ..... 46	16th Century Lombard painters ..... 88	Maps ..... 16	Lorraine Atrium ..... A
17th-18th Century Dutch painters ..... 47, 29, 50, 53, 54	Caravaggio Hall ..... 90	Perugino & Luca Signorelli ..... 19	Entrances to Vasari Corridor ..... B
17th-18th Century French painters ..... 48, 51	Bartolomeo Manfredi Hall ..... 91	Albrecht Dürer & German Renaissance ..... 20	View area ..... C
17th Century Flemish painters ..... 52, 55	Gherardo delle Notti Hall ..... 92	Giambellino & Giorgione ..... 21	Terrace over the Loggia dei Lanzi ..... D
Hellenistic marbles ..... 56	Caravaggesque painters .. 93	Flemish & German Renaissance ..... 22	
Andrea del Sarto, the ancients, & friends ... 57-59	<b>Second Floor Galleries</b> ▼	Andrea Mantegna & Correggio ..... 23	
Rosso Fiorentino ..... 60	Archaeology ..... 1	Miniatures ..... 24	
Pontormo ..... 61	Giotto & Thirteenth Century ..... 2	Michelangelo & the Florentines ..... 35	
Vasari and Allori ..... 62	14th Century Siensese Painting & ..... 3	Niobe [in restoration] .... 42	
16th Century (2nd half) .... 63	14th Century Florentine Painting ..... 4	17th Century Italian painting ..... 43	
Bronzino ..... 64	International Gothic .... 5, 6	17th Century Flemish painting ..... 44	
Bronzino & the Medici ..... 65	Early Renaissance ..... 7	Eighteenth Century painting ..... 45	
Raphael ..... 66	Filippo Lippi, Piero della Francesca ..... 8		
Correggio & Roman painters ..... 68, 71	Antonio & Piero del Pollaiuolo ..... 9		
Parmigianino ..... 74	Sandro Botticelli ..... 10-14		
Giorgione & Sebastiano del Piombo ... 75			



Late in the afternoon is the least crowded time to visit. For a €4 fee, advance tickets can be reserved by phone, online, or, once in Florence, at the Uffizi reservation booth (*advance tickets Consorzio* ✉ *ITA, Piazza Pitti 1* ☎ *055/294883*) at least one day in advance of your visit. Keep the confirmation number and take it with you to the door at the museum marked “Reservations.” In the past, you were ushered in almost immediately. But overbooking (especially in high season) has led to long lines and long waits even with a reservation. Taking photographs in the Uffizi has been legal since 2014, and has contributed to making this what-ought-to-be-a-sublime-museum-going experience more of a day at the zoo. Beware of the scalpers, who are dressed in fake military gear (the epaulettes look like something out of “Fantasy Island”): yes, they will help you jump the line, but they will charge you an arm and a leg in order to do so. ✉ *Piazzale degli Uffizi 6, Piazza della Signoria* ☎ *055/234885* 🌐 [www.uffizi.firenze.it](http://www.uffizi.firenze.it); [www.polomuseale.firenze.it](http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it) for reservations 🗳️ *From €20* 🕒 *Closed Mon.*

## **Gucci Museo**

**MUSEUM** | This museum has all the class and elegance associated with the Gucci name. Tasteful displays of their famous luggage, shoes, and sporting goods (including snorkels and flippers) fill this 14th-century building called the Palazzo del Tribunale di Mercatanzia. Centuries ago, the place heard and tried cases by disgruntled guildsmen, and it’s an odd juxtaposition to see an early 15th-century fresco of Christ crucified in a room filled with 20th-century jewelry. ✉ *Piazza della Signoria 10, Duomo* ☎ *055/75923300* 🌐 [www.gucci.com](http://www.gucci.com) 🗳️ *€8.*

## **Mercato Nuovo** (*New Market*)

**MARKET** | **FAMILY** | The open-air loggia, built in 1551, teems with souvenir stands, but the real attraction is a copy of Pietro Tacca’s bronze *Porcellino* (which translates as “little pig” despite the fact the animal is, in fact, a wild boar). The *Porcellino* is Florence’s equivalent of the Trevi Fountain: put a coin in his mouth, and if it falls through the grate below (according to one interpretation), it means you’ll return to Florence someday. What you’re seeing is a copy of a copy: Tacca’s original version, in the Museo Bardini, is actually a copy of an ancient Greek work. ✉ *Via Por Santa Maria at Via*

Porta Rossa, Piazza della Repubblica 🕒 Closed Sun.

### Museo dei Ragazzi

MUSEUM | FAMILY | Florence's "Children's Museum" may be the best-kept public access secret in Florence. A series of interactive tours includes "Encounters with History," during which participants meet and talk with Giorgio Vasari or Galileo Galilei and explore secret passageways. Events occur at different venues (Palazzo Vecchio, Museo Stibbert, Cappella Brancacci, and the Museo Galileo). Tours are in English and must be booked in advance. Though most of the tours are geared for the three- to eight-year-old crowd, adults will find them lots of fun, too. ✉ Piazza della Signoria 1, Florence 📞 055/2768224 🌐 [www.museoragazzi.it](http://www.museoragazzi.it) 🏠 €10.

### ★ Museo dell'Opera del Duomo (Cathedral Museum)

MUSEUM | A seven-year restoration of this museum and its glorious reopening in October 2015 have given Florence one of its most modern, up-to-date museums. Exhibition space has doubled in size, and the old facade of the cathedral, torn down in the 1580s, has been re-created with a 1:1 relationship to the real thing. Both sets of Ghiberti's doors adorn the same room. Michelangelo's *Pietà* finally has the space it deserves, as does Donatello's *Mary Magdalene*. ✉ Piazza del Duomo 9, Duomo 📞 055/2302885 🌐 [www.operaduomo.firenze.it](http://www.operaduomo.firenze.it) 🏠 €18 🕒 Closed 1st Tues. of month.

### Museo Galileo

MUSEUM | FAMILY | Although it tends to be obscured by the glamour of the neighboring Uffizi, this science museum has much to brag about: Galileo's own instruments, antique armillary spheres, and other reminders of the artistic and scientific feats of the Renaissance. ✉ Piazza dei Giudici 1, Piazza della Signoria 📞 055/265311 🌐 [www.museogalileo.it](http://www.museogalileo.it) 🏠 €10 🕒 Closed Tues. afternoon.

### Oratorio dei Buonomini di San Martino

MUSEUM | Founded in 1441 by Antoninus, Bishop of Florence, to offer alms to the *poveri vergognosi* (the ashamed poor), this one-room oratory is decorated with 15th-century frescoes by the school of Ghirlandaio that vividly depict the confraternity's activities. More than 500 years later, the

Compagnia dei Buonomini, or Confraternity of the Good Men, continues to perform charitable works, linking Renaissance notions of charity to the 21st century. ✉ *Piazza San Martino, Bargello* 🌐 [www.buonominidisanmartino.it](http://www.buonominidisanmartino.it)  
🚪 *Free.*

## Orsanmichele

**HISTORIC SITE** | This multipurpose structure began as an 8th-century oratory and then in 1290 was turned into an open-air loggia for selling grain. Destroyed by fire in 1304, it was rebuilt as a loggia-market. Between 1367 and 1380 the arcades were closed and two stories were added above; finally, at century's end it was turned into a church. Inside is a beautifully detailed 14th-century Gothic tabernacle by Andrea Orcagna (1308–68). The exterior niches contain sculptures (all copies) dating from the early 1400s to the early 1600s by Donatello and Verrocchio (1435–88), among others, which were paid for by the guilds. Although it is a copy, Verrocchio's *Doubting Thomas* (circa 1470) is particularly deserving of attention. Here you see Christ, like the building's other figures, entirely framed within the niche, and St. Thomas standing on its bottom ledge, with his right foot outside the niche frame. This one detail, the positioning of a single foot, brings the whole composition to life. It's possible to see the original sculptures at the **Museo di Orsanmichele**, which is open Monday only. ✉ *Via dei Calzaiuoli, Piazza della Repubblica* ☎ *055/284944* 🌐 [www.polomuseale.firenze.it](http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it) 🚪 *Free* 🕒 *Closed Tues.–Sun.*

## Ospedale Santa Maria Nuova

**HOSPITAL—SIGHT** | Folco Portinari, the father of Dante's Beatrice, founded this sprawling complex in 1288. It was originally a hostel for visiting pilgrims and travelers. During the Black Death of 1348 it served as a hospice for those afflicted. At another point it served as an office where money could be exchanged and deposited and letters could be received; Michelangelo did his banking here. It had been lavishly decorated by the top Florentine artists of the day, but most of the works, such as the frescoes by Domenico Veneziano and Piero della Francesca, have disappeared or been moved to the Uffizi for safekeeping. Today it functions as a hospital in the modern sense of the word, but you can visit the single-nave church of **Sant'Egidio**, in the middle of the complex, where the frescoes would have stood. Imagine, too,

Hugo van der Goes's (1435–82) magnificent *Portinari Altarpiece*, which once crowned the high altar; it's now in the Uffizi. Commissioned by Tommaso Portinari, a descendent of Folco's, it arrived from Bruges in 1483 and created quite a stir. Bernardo Rossellino's immense marble tabernacle (1450), still in the church, is worth a look. ✉ *Via Sant'Egidio and Piazza di Santa Maria Nuova, San Lorenzo* 🌐 [www.fondazioneasantamarianuova.com](http://www.fondazioneasantamarianuova.com).

### Palazzo Davanzati

CASTLE/PALACE | The prestigious Davizzi family owned this 14th-century palace in one of Florence's swankiest medieval neighborhoods (it was sold to the Davanzati in the 15th century). The place is a delight, as you can wander through the surprisingly light-filled courtyard, and climb the steep stairs to the piano nobile (there's also an elevator), where the family did most of its living. The beautiful *Sala dei Pappagalli* (Parrot Room) is adorned with trompe-l'oeil tapestries and gaily painted birds. ✉ *Piazza Davanzati 13, Piazza della Repubblica* ☎ 055/2388610 🌐 [www.polomuseale.firenze.it](http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it) 🚗 €6 ☺ Closed 1st, 3rd, 5th Sun. of month, and 2nd and 4th Mon. of month.

### Palazzo Vecchio (Old Palace)

CASTLE/PALACE | FAMILY | Florence's forbidding, fortresslike city hall was begun in 1299, presumably designed by Arnolfo di Cambio, and its massive bulk and towering campanile dominate Piazza della Signoria. It was built as a meeting place for the guildsmen governing the city at the time; today it is still City Hall. The interior courtyard is a good deal less severe, having been remodeled by Michelozzo (1396–1472) in 1453; a copy of Verrocchio's bronze *puttino* (cherub), topping the central fountain, softens the space. (The original is upstairs.)

The main attraction is on the second floor: two adjoining rooms that supply one of the most startling contrasts in Florence. The first is the opulently vast **Sala dei Cinquecento** (Room of the Five Hundred), named for the 500-member Great Council, the people's assembly established after the death of Lorenzo the Magnificent, that met here. Giorgio Vasari and others decorated the room, around 1563–65, with gargantuan frescoes celebrating Florentine history; depictions of battles with nearby cities predominate. Continuing the martial theme, the room also contains Michelangelo's *Victory*, intended for the never-completed tomb of Pope Julius II (1443–1513), plus other

sculptures of decidedly lesser quality.

In comparison, the little **Studiolo**, just off the Sala dei Cinquecento's entrance, was a private room meant for the duke and those whom he invited in. Here's where the melancholy Francesco I (1541–87), son of Cosimo I, stored his priceless treasures and conducted scientific experiments. Designed by Vasari, it was decorated by him, Giambologna, and many others.

Spectacular 360-degree views may be had from the battlements (only 77 steps) and from the tower (223 more). ✉ *Piazza della Signoria* 📞 055/27684224 🌐 [museiciviciorentini.comune.fi.it](http://museiciviciorentini.comune.fi.it) 🚗 From €10.

### **Piazza della Repubblica**

**PLAZA** | The square marks the site of the ancient forum that was the core of the original Roman settlement. While the street plan around the piazza still reflects the carefully plotted Roman military encampment, the Mercato Vecchio (Old Market), which had been here since the Middle Ages, was demolished and the current piazza was constructed between 1885 and 1895 as a Neoclassical showpiece. The piazza is lined with outdoor cafés, affording an excellent opportunity for people-watching. ✉ *Florence*.

### **Piazza della Signoria**

**PLAZA** | Here, in 1497 and in 1498, the famous “bonfire of the vanities” took place, when the fanatical Dominican friar Savonarola induced his followers to hurl their worldly goods into the flames; it was also here, a year later, that he was hanged as a heretic and, ironically, burned. A plaque in the piazza pavement marks the spot of his execution. Cellini's famous bronze *Perseus* holding the severed head of Medusa is among the most important sculptures in the Loggia dei Lanzi. Other works include *The Rape of the Sabine* and *Hercules and the Centaur*, both late-16th-century works by Giambologna (1529–1608). In the square, the Neptune Fountain, created between 1550 and 1575 by Bartolomeo Ammannati, dominates. The Florentines call it il Biancone, which may be translated as “the big white man” or “the big white lump.” Giambologna's equestrian statue, to the left of the fountain, portrays Grand Duke Cosimo I. Occupying the steps of the Palazzo Vecchio is a copy of Michelangelo's *David*, as well as Baccio Bandinelli's *Hercules*. ✉ *Florence*.

## **Ponte Vecchio** (*Old Bridge*)

**BRIDGE/TUNNEL** | This charmingly simple bridge was built in 1345 to replace an earlier bridge swept away by a flood. Its shops first housed butchers, then grocers, blacksmiths, and other merchants. But in 1593 the Medici grand duke Ferdinand I (1549–1609), whose private corridor linking the Medici palace (Palazzo Pitti) with the Medici offices (the Uffizi) crossed the bridge atop the shops, decided that all this plebeian commerce under his feet was unseemly. So he threw out the butchers and blacksmiths and installed 41 goldsmiths and eight jewelers. The bridge has been devoted solely to these two trades ever since.

The **Corridoio Vasariano** (✉ *Piazzale degli Uffizi 6, Piazza della Signoria*, ☎ 055/294883), the private Medici elevated passageway, was built by Vasari in 1565. Though the ostensible reason for its construction was one of security, it was more likely designed so that the Medici family wouldn't have to walk amid the commoners. Take a moment to study the Ponte Santa Trinita, the next bridge downriver, from either the bridge or the corridor. It was designed by Bartolomeo Ammannati in 1567 (probably from sketches by Michelangelo), blown up by the retreating Germans during World War II, and painstakingly reconstructed after the war. The view from the Ponte Santa Trinita is beautiful, which might explain why so many young lovers seem to hang out there. ✉ *Florence*.

## **San Michele Visdomini**

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | Aficionados of 16th-century mannerism should stop in this church, which has a *Sacra Conversazione* by Jacopo Pontormo (1494–1556). The early work, said by Vasari to have been executed on paper, is in dire need of a cleaning. Its palette is somewhat bereft of the lively colors typically associated with Pontormo. ✉ *Via dei Servi at Via Bufalini, Duomo*.

# r Restaurants

## **Birreria Centrale**

\$\$ | **ECLECTIC** | The feel here is more Munich beer hall than Florentine trattoria; indeed, although the menu lists plenty of Italian dishes, it also

emphasizes sausages and sauerkraut. Heavy wooden tables are set closely together, and copies of 19th-century paintings adorn the intensely yellow walls, along with two frescoed Michelangelesque nudes that cavort over a brick arch. **Known for:** outdoor seating; copious portions; cheerful staff. [D] *Average main: €16* ✉ *Piazza Cimatori 1/r, Duomo* ☎ *055/211915* ⌚ *Closed Sun.*

### Caffè delle Carrozze

[D] | ITALIAN | The convenient Caffè delle Carrozze, around the corner from the Uffizi and practically at the foot of the Ponte Vecchio, has many terrific flavors, especially the chocolate-chip laced coffee. **Known for:** flavorful ice cream; outdoor seating with looking on to the Ponte Vecchio; sandwiches. [D] *Average main: €3* ✉ *Piazza del Pesce 3–5/r, Piazza della Signoria* ☎ *055/2396810* = *No credit cards.*

### Coquinarius

\$\$ | ITALIAN | This rustically elegant space, which has served many purposes over the past 600 years, offers some of the tastiest food in town at great prices. It's the perfect place to come if you aren't sure what you're hungry for, as they offer a little bit of everything: salad-lovers will have a hard time choosing from among the lengthy list (the Scozzese, with poached chicken, avocado, and bacon, is a winner); those with a yen for pasta will face agonizing choices (the ravioli with pecorino and pears is particularly good). **Known for:** marvelous salads; reasonably priced wine list; service can be inconsistent. [D] *Average main: €15* ✉ *Via delle Oche 15/r, Duomo* ☎ *055/2302153* 🌐 [www.coquinarius.it](http://www.coquinarius.it).

### Gelateria Carabe

[D] | ITALIAN | Specializing in things Sicilian, this shop is known for its tart and flavorful *granità* (granular flavored ices), which are great thirst-quenchers. **Known for:** some of the best gelato around; close to the Accademia; no-frills shop. [D] *Average main: €3* ✉ *Via Ricasoli 60/r, San Marco* ☎ *055/289476* 🌐 [www.parcocarabe.it](http://www.parcocarabe.it) = *No credit cards.*

### ★ Gucci OsteriaChef

\$\$ | FUSION | Chef/artist/visionary Massimo Bottura has joined forces with

creative folk at Gucci to make a marvelous menu that is both classic and innovative. Though he's trained with Ducasse and Adria, he says his major influence was his grandmother's cooking. **Known for:** tortellini in crema di Parmigiano reggiano; the Chianina hot dog; outdoor seating in one of Florence's most beautiful squares. [💰] *Average main: €18* ✉ *Piazza della Signoria 10, Piazza della Signoria* ☎ *055/75927038* 🌐 [www.gucci.com](http://www.gucci.com).

### Le Mosacce

\$ | TUSCAN | Come to this tiny, cramped, and boisterous place for a quick bite to eat. The menu, written in three languages, includes hearty, stick-to-your-ribs Florentine food such as ribollita. **Known for:** authentic home cooking; frequented by locals; generously sized portions. [💰] *Average main: €14* ✉ *Via del Proconsolo 55/r, Duomo* ☎ *055/294361* 🌐 [www.trattorialemossacce.it](http://www.trattorialemossacce.it) 🕒 *Closed weekends.*

### Ora d'Aria

\$\$\$\$ | MODERN ITALIAN | The name means “Hour of Air” and refers to the time of day when prisoners were let outside for fresh air—alluding to the fact that this gem began life across the street from an old prison. In the kitchen, gifted chef Marco Stabile turns out exquisite Tuscan classics as well as more fanciful dishes, which are as beautiful as they are delicious. **Known for:** unusual food combinations; lunchtime tapas menu; graceful staff. [💰] *Average main: €40* ✉ *Via Georgofili 79/r, Piazza della Signoria* ☎ *055/2001699* 🌐 [www.oradariaristorante.com](http://www.oradariaristorante.com) 🕒 *Closed Sun.*

### Ristorante Frescobaldi Firenze

\$\$\$ | TUSCAN | The Frescobaldi family has run a vineyard for more than 700 years, and this swanky establishment offers tasty and sumptuous fare to accompany the seriously fine wines. The menu is typically Tuscan, but turned up a notch or two: the *faraona in umido con l'uva* (stewed guinea fowl with grapes) comes with a side of feather-light mashed potatoes. **Known for:** seasonal ingredients used in creative ways; fine fish options; vegans will not go hungry. [💰] *Average main: €30* ✉ *Piazza Signoria 31, Piazza della Signoria* ☎ *055/284724* 🌐 [www.frescobaldifirenze.it](http://www.frescobaldifirenze.it).

### ★ Rivoire



\$\$ | ITALIAN | One of the best spots in Florence for people-watching offers stellar service, light snacks, and terrific aperitivi. It's been around since the 1860s, and has been famous for its hot and cold chocolate (with or without cream) for more than a century. **Known for:** hot chocolate; friendly bartenders; the view on the piazza. [💰] *Average main: €15* ✉ *Via Vacchereccia 4/r, Piazza della Signoria* ☎ *055/214412* 🌐 [www.rivoire.it](http://www.rivoire.it).

## h Hotels

### Hermitage

\$\$ | HOTEL | Some rooms here have views of the Palazzo Vecchio, and others of the Arno; the rooftop terrace, where you can have breakfast or an aperitivo, is decked with flowers. **Pros:** views; friendly staff; enviable position a stone's throw from the Ponte Vecchio. **Cons:** short flight of stairs to reach elevator; might be time for a refurbishing; street noise sometimes a problem. [💰] *Rooms from: €178* ✉ *Vicolo Marzio 1, Piazza della Signoria* ☎ *055/287216* 🌐 [www.hermitagehotel.com](http://www.hermitagehotel.com) ↗ 28 rooms 🍴🍷 Free breakfast.

### Hotel Benivieni

\$\$ | HOTEL | This tranquil, former 15th-century palace is one block from the Duomo (in the late 19th century, it was a synagogue). **Pros:** great location; suitable for families; spacious guest rooms. **Cons:** small bathrooms; some Fodor's readers note street noise, despite triple-glazed windows; on the direct path of many tour groups. [💰] *Rooms from: €180* ✉ *Via delle Oche 5, Duomo* ☎ *055/2382133* 🌐 [www.hotelbenivieni.it](http://www.hotelbenivieni.it) ↗ 15 rooms 🍴🍷 Free breakfast.

### Hotel degli Orafi

\$\$\$ | HOTEL | A key scene in *A Room with a View* was shot in this pensione, which is today a luxury hotel adorned with chintz and marble. **Pros:** stellar Arno views; rooftop bar; quiet location during the evenings; welcome drink upon arrival. **Cons:** some street noise in river-facing rooms; on the path of many tour groups during the day; somewhat pricey. [💰] *Rooms from: €300* ✉ *Lungarno Archibusieri 4, Piazza della Signoria* ☎ *055/26622* 🌐 [www.hoteldegliorafi.it](http://www.hoteldegliorafi.it) ↗ 42 rooms 🍴🍷 Free breakfast.

## Hotel Helvetia and Bristol

\$\$\$\$ | HOTEL | From the cozy yet sophisticated lobby with its stone columns to the guest rooms decorated with prints, you might feel as if you're a guest in a sophisticated manor house. **Pros:** central location; excellent restaurant; old-world charm. **Cons:** rooms facing the street get some noise; breakfast is not always included in the price of a room; could use a revamp. [D] Rooms from: €585 ✉ Via dei Pescioni 2, Piazza della Repubblica ☎ 055/26651 🌐 [www.starhotelscollezione.com](http://www.starhotelscollezione.com) ↗ 67 rooms 🕒 Free breakfast.

## ★ In Piazza della Signoria

\$\$\$ | B&B/INN | A cozy feeling permeates these charming rooms in this home that is part of a 15th century palazzo, all of which are uniquely decorated and lovingly furnished; some have damask curtains, others fanciful frescoes in the bathroom. **Pros:** marvelous staff; tasty breakfast with a view of Piazza della Signoria; some rooms easily accommodate three. **Cons:** short flight of stairs to reach elevator; some of the rooms have steps up into showers and bathtubs; books up quickly during high season. [D] Rooms from: €250 ✉ Via dei Magazzini 2, Piazza della Signoria ☎ 055/2399546 🌐 [www.inpiazzaadellasignoria.com](http://www.inpiazzaadellasignoria.com) ↗ 13 rooms 🕒 Free breakfast.

## ★ Palazzo Niccolini al Duomo

\$\$ | HOTEL | The graceful Marchesa Ginevra Niccolini di Camugliano has taken her husband's family's palazzo (acquired by an ancestor in 1532) and turned it into a luxurious place that still manages to evoke a cozy, yet highly sophisticated, home. **Pros:** steps away from the Duomo; the well-appointed honor bar; the hardwood floors. **Cons:** street noise sometimes a problem; some hallway noise a possibility; in high season, books up quickly. [D] Rooms from: €197 ✉ Via dei Servi 2, Florence ☎ 055/282412 🌐 [www.niccolinidomepalace.com](http://www.niccolinidomepalace.com) ↗ 14 rooms 🕒 No meals.

## Palazzo Vecchietti

\$\$\$\$ | HOTEL | If you're looking for a swank setting, and the possibility of staying in for a meal (each room has a tiny kitchenette), look no further than this hotel which, while thoroughly modern, dates to the 15th century. **Pros:** great service; central location; public room has a Renaissance fireplace and high ceilings. **Cons:** no restaurant; some street noise a possibility; might be too trendy for some. [D] Rooms from: €629 ✉ Via degli Strozzi 4, Duomo ☎

055/2302802 🌐 [www.palazzovecchiotti.com](http://www.palazzovecchiotti.com) ➡ 14 rooms 🍴 Free breakfast.

### Sani Tourist House

\$ | B&B/INN | Hosts Elizabeth and Remi have taken their former no-frills accommodation and spruced it up a bit, adding such amenities as air-conditioning and the occasional private bath to make a stay here more pleasant. **Pros:** good deals for single travelers, even lower rates off-season; central location in a quiet cul-de-sac; kind hosts. **Cons:** no reception; not all rooms have en suite bathrooms. 💰 Rooms from: €115 ✉ Piazza dei Giuochi 1, Duomo ☎ 055/211235 🌐 [www.sanibnb.it](http://www.sanibnb.it) ➡ 6 rooms, 2 with shared bath 🍴 No meals.

## n Nightlife

### Hard Rock Cafe

MUSIC CLUBS | Hard Rock packs in young Florentines and travelers eager to sample the iconic chain's take on classic American grub. ✉ Piazza della Repubblica, Piazza della Repubblica ☎ 055/277841 🌐 [www.hardrock.com](http://www.hardrock.com).

### ★ il bar de l'O

BARS/PUBS | This swanky, American-style bar is attached to the Hotel l'Orologio. It's a good spot for a well-executed cocktail with tasty snacks; when it's warm, you can sit outside and gaze at the beautiful facade of Santa Maria Novella. ✉ Via delle Belle Donne 34/r, Duomo ☎ 055/277380 🌐 [www.ilbardelo.com](http://www.ilbardelo.com).

### Yab

DANCE CLUBS | Yab never seems to go out of style, though it increasingly becomes the haunt of Florentine high school and university students intent on dancing and doing vodka shots. ✉ Via Sasseti 5/r, Piazza della Repubblica ☎ 055/215160 🌐 [www.yab.it](http://www.yab.it).

## p Performing Arts

## British Institute of Florence

FILM | The British Institute of Florence runs several English-language film series; the programmer has a penchant for classic movies. Also on offer here are weekly lectures, courses, and a stunning library. ✉ *Palazzo Lanfredini, Lungarno Guicciardini 9, Lungarno South* ☎ 055/26778270 🌐 [www.britishinstitute.it](http://www.britishinstitute.it).

## Odeon Firenze

FILM | This magnificent Art Deco theater shows first-run English-language films throughout the week. ✉ *Piazza Strozzi 2, Piazza della Repubblica* ☎ 055/295051 🌐 [www.odeonfirenze.com](http://www.odeonfirenze.com).

## Orchestra da Camera Fiorentina

MUSIC | This orchestra performs various concerts of classical music throughout the year at Orsanmichele, the grain market-turned-church. ✉ *Via Monferrato 2, Piazza della Signoria* 🌐 [www.orchestraflorentina.it](http://www.orchestraflorentina.it).

# b Shopping

## ★ Bernardo

CLOTHING | Come here for men's trousers, cashmere sweaters, and shirts with details like mother-of-pearl buttons. ✉ *Via Porta Rossa 87/r, Piazza della Repubblica* ☎ 055/283333 🌐 [www.bernardofirenze.it](http://www.bernardofirenze.it).

## Cabó

CLOTHING | Missoni knitwear is the main draw at Cabó. ✉ *Via Porta Rossa 77-79/r, Piazza della Repubblica* ☎ 055/215774.

## Carlo Piccini

JEWELRY/ACCESSORIES | Still in operation after several generations, this Florentine institution sells antique jewelry and makes pieces to order; you can also get old jewelry reset here. ✉ *Ponte Vecchio 31/r, Piazza della Signoria* ☎ 055/210891 🌐 [www.carlopiccini.com](http://www.carlopiccini.com).

## Cassetti

**JEWELRY/ACCESSORIES** | This jeweler combines precious and semiprecious stones and metals in contemporary settings. ✉ *Ponte Vecchio 54/r, Piazza della Signoria* ☎ 055/2396028 🌐 [www.cassetti.it](http://www.cassetti.it).

## **Diesel**

**CLOTHING** | Trendy Diesel started in Vicenza; its gear is on the “must have” list of many Italian teens. ✉ *Via dei Lamberti 13/r, Piazza della Signoria* ☎ 055/2399963 🌐 [www.diesel.com](http://www.diesel.com).

## **Gherardi**

**JEWELRY/ACCESSORIES** | Florence’s king of coral, Gherardi has the city’s largest selection of finely crafted pieces, as well as cultured pearls, jade, and turquoise. ✉ *Ponte Vecchio 5/r, Piazza della Signoria* ☎ 055/211809.

## **il Papiro**

**BOOKS/STATIONERY** | One of several locations in the historic center, this place has been making that classic Florentine peacock paper for decades. ✉ *Via de’ Tavolini 13/r, Duomo* ☎ 055/213823 🌐 [www.ilpapirofirenze.it](http://www.ilpapirofirenze.it) 🕒 Closed Sun.

## **Liu-Jo**

**CLOTHING** | For something to wear for a night out, check out Liu-Jo. ✉ *Via Calimala 14/r, Piazza della Repubblica* ☎ 055/216164 🌐 [www.liujo.com](http://www.liujo.com).

## **Luisa Via Roma**

**CLOTHING** | The surreal window displays at Luisa Via Roma hint at the trendy yet tasteful clothing inside this fascinating *alta moda* (high-style) boutique, which stocks the world’s top designers as well as Luisa’s own line. ✉ *Via Roma 19–21/r, Duomo* ☎ 055/217826 🌐 [www.luisaviaroma.com](http://www.luisaviaroma.com).

## **Mandragora Art Store**

**HOUSEHOLD ITEMS/FURNITURE** | This is one of the first attempts in Florence to cash in on the museum-store craze. In store are reproductions of valued works of art and jewelry. ✉ *Piazza del Duomo 50/r, Duomo* ☎ 055/2654384 🌐 [www.mandragora.it](http://www.mandragora.it).

**Mercato dei Fiori** (*flower market*)

**OUTDOOR/FLEA/GREEN MARKETS** | Every Thursday morning from September through June the covered loggia in Piazza della Repubblica hosts a Mercato dei Fiori; it's awash in a lively riot of plants, flowers, and difficult-to-find herbs. ✉ *Piazza della Repubblica, Florence.*

### **Mercato del Porcellino**

**OUTDOOR/FLEA/GREEN MARKETS** | If you're looking for cheery, inexpensive trinkets to take home, roam through the stalls under the loggia of the Mercato del Porcellino. ✉ *Via Por Santa Maria at Via Porta Rossa, Piazza della Repubblica.*

### **Oro Due**

**JEWELRY/ACCESSORIES** | Gold jewelry and other beautiful objects are priced according to the level of craftsmanship and the price of gold bullion that day. ✉ *Via Lambertesca 12/r, Piazza della Signoria* ☎ 055/292143.

### **Patrizia Pepe**

**CLOTHING** | The Florentine designer has clothes for all ages, especially for women with a tiny streak of rebelliousness. Sizes run extremely small. ✉ *Via Strozzi 11/19r, Duomo* ☎ 055/2302518 🌐 [www.patriziapepe.com](http://www.patriziapepe.com).

### ★ **Penko**

**JEWELRY/ACCESSORIES** | Renaissance goldsmiths provide the inspiration for this dazzling jewelry with a contemporary feel. ✉ *Via dell'Oca 20–22/r, Duomo* ☎ 055/2052577 🌐 [www.paolopenko.com](http://www.paolopenko.com).

### **Spazio A**

**CLOTHING** | For cutting-edge fashion, these fun and funky window displays merit a stop. The shop carries such well-known designers as Alberta Ferretti and Moschino, as well as lesser-known Italian, English, and French designers. ✉ *Via Porta Rossa 109–115/r, Piazza della Repubblica* ☎ 055/6582109.

## San Lorenzo

A sculptor, painter, architect, and poet, Florentine native son Michelangelo was a consummate genius, and some of his finest creations remain in his hometown. The Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana is perhaps his most fanciful work of architecture. A key to understanding Michelangelo's genius can be found in the magnificent Cappelle Medicee, where both his sculptural and architectural prowess can be clearly seen. Planned frescoes were never completed, sadly, for they would have shown in one space the artistic triple threat that he certainly was. The towering yet graceful *David*, perhaps his most famous work, resides in the Galleria dell'Accademia.

After visiting San Lorenzo, first visit the churches and museums which close early (the Museo di San Marco closes at 1:50 on weekdays), then explore the market that surrounds the church, which stays open until 7 pm.

## S Sights

### **Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana** (*Laurentian Library*)

**LIBRARY** | Michelangelo the architect was every bit as original as Michelangelo the sculptor. Unlike Brunelleschi (the architect of the Spedale degli Innocenti), however, he wasn't obsessed with proportion and perfect geometry. He was interested in experimentation and invention and in the expression of a personal vision that was at times highly idiosyncratic.

It was never more idiosyncratic than in the Laurentian Library, begun in 1524 and finished in 1568 by Bartolomeo Ammannati. Its famous **vestibolo**, a strangely shaped anteroom, has had scholars scratching their heads for centuries. In a space more than two stories high, why did Michelangelo limit his use of columns and pilasters to the upper two-thirds of the wall? Why didn't he rest them on strong pedestals instead of on huge, decorative curlicue scrolls, which rob them of all visual support? Why did he recess them into the wall, which makes them look weaker still? The architectural elements here do not stand firm and strong and tall as inside San Lorenzo next door; instead, they seem to be pressed into the wall as if into putty, giving the room a soft,

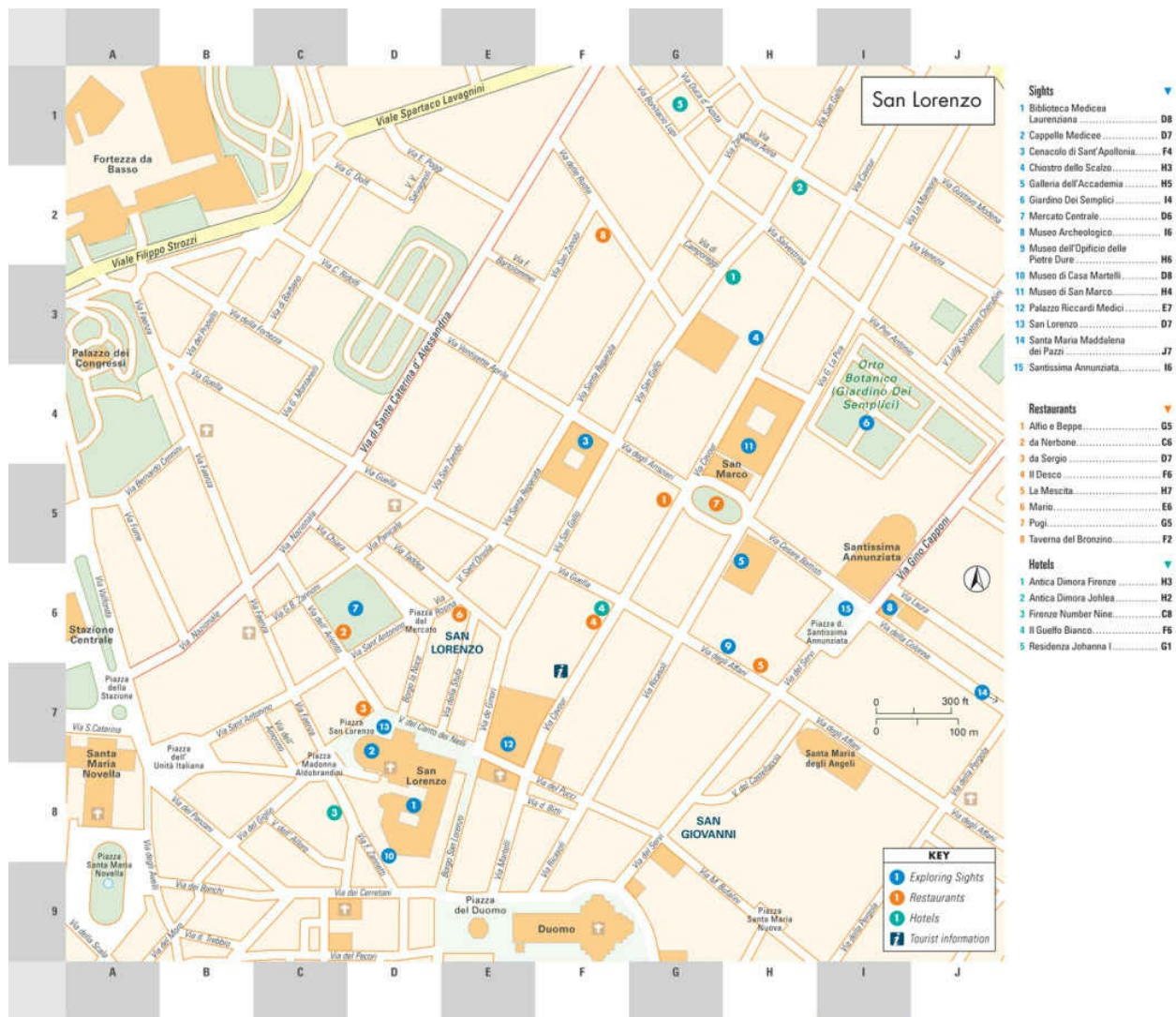
rubbery look that is one of the strangest effects ever achieved by 16th-century architecture. It's almost as if Michelangelo intentionally flouted the conventions of the High Renaissance to see what kind of bizarre, mannered effect might result. His innovations were tremendously influential, and produced a period of architectural experimentation. As his contemporary Giorgio Vasari put it, "Artisans have been infinitely and perpetually indebted to him because he broke the bonds and chains of a way of working that had become habitual by common usage."

The anteroom's staircase (best viewed straight on), which emerges from the library with the visual force of an unstoppable lava flow, has been exempted from the criticism, however. In its highly sculptural conception and execution, it is quite simply one of the most original and fluid staircases in the world. ✉ *Piazza San Lorenzo 9, entrance to left of San Lorenzo, Florence*  
🌐 [www.bml.firenze.sbn.it](http://www.bml.firenze.sbn.it) 📬 *Special exhibitions €3* 🕒 *Closed weekends.*

### **Cappelle Medicee** (*Medici Chapels*)

**MEMORIAL** | This magnificent complex includes the **Cappella dei Principi**, the Medici chapel and mausoleum that was begun in 1605 and kept marble workers busy for several hundred years, and the **Sagrestia Nuova** (New Sacristy), designed by Michelangelo and so called to distinguish it from Brunelleschi's Sagrestia Vecchia (Old Sacristy) in San Lorenzo.





Michelangelo received the commission for the New Sacristy in 1520 from Cardinal Giulio de' Medici (1478–1534), who later became Pope Clement VII. The cardinal wanted a new burial chapel for his cousins Giuliano, Duke of Nemours (1478–1534), and Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino (1492–1519), and he also wanted to honor his father, also named Giuliano, and his uncle, Lorenzo il Magnifico. The result was a tour de force of architecture and sculpture. Architecturally, Michelangelo was as original and inventive here as ever, but it is, quite properly, the powerfully sculpted tombs that dominate the room. The scheme is allegorical: on the tomb on the right are figures representing Day and Night, and on the tomb to the left are figures representing Dawn and Dusk; above them are idealized sculptures of the two men, usually interpreted to represent the active life and the contemplative life. But the allegorical

meanings are secondary; what is most important is the intense presence of the sculptural figures and the force with which they hit the viewer. ✉ *Piazza di Madonna degli Aldobrandini, San Lorenzo* ☎ 055/294883 reservations 🌐 [www.polomuseale.firenze.it](http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it) 🎫 €8 🕒 Closed 1st, 3rd, and 5th Mon., and 2nd and 4th Sun. of month.

### **Cenacolo di Sant'Apollonia**

RELIGIOUS SITE | The frescoes of the refectory of a former Benedictine nunnery were painted in sinewy style by Andrea del Castagno, a follower of Masaccio (1401–28). The *Last Supper* is a powerful version of this typical refectory theme. From the entrance, walk around the corner to Via San Gallo 25 and take a peek at the lovely 15th-century cloister that belonged to the same monastery but is now part of the University of Florence. ✉ *Via XXVII Aprile 1, San Marco* ☎ 055/294883 🌐 [www.polomuseale.firenze.it](http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it).

### **Chiostro dello Scalzo**

RELIGIOUS SITE | Often overlooked, this small, peaceful 16th-century cloister was frescoed in grisaille by Andrea del Sarto (1486–1530) and Franciabigio with scenes from the life of St. John the Baptist, Florence's patron saint. ✉ *Via Cavour 69, San Marco* ☎ 055/294883 🌐 [www.polomuseale.firenze.it](http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it).

### **Galleria dell'Accademia (Accademia Gallery)**

MUSEUM | FAMILY | The collection of Florentine paintings, dating from the 13th to 18th century, is largely unremarkable, but the sculptures by Michelangelo are worth the price of admission. The unfinished *Slaves*, fighting their way out of their marble prisons, were meant for the tomb of Michelangelo's overly demanding patron Pope Julius II (1443–1513). But the focal point is the original *David*, moved here from Piazza della Signoria in 1873. *David* was commissioned in 1501 by the Opera del Duomo (Cathedral Works Committee), which gave the 26-year-old sculptor a leftover block of marble that had been ruined 40 years earlier by two other sculptors. Michelangelo's success with the block was so dramatic that the city showered him with honors, and the Opera del Duomo voted to build him a house and a studio in which to live and work.

Today *David* is beset not by Goliath but by tourists, and seeing the statue at all—much less really studying it—can be a trial. Save yourself a long wait in

line by reserving tickets in advance. A Plexiglas barrier surrounds the sculpture, following a 1991 attack on it by a self-proclaimed hammer-wielding art anarchist who, luckily, inflicted only a few minor nicks on the toes. The statue is not quite what it seems. It is so poised and graceful and alert—so miraculously alive—that it is often considered the definitive sculptural embodiment of the High Renaissance perfection. But its true place in the history of art is a bit more complicated.

As Michelangelo well knew, the Renaissance painting and sculpture that preceded his work were deeply concerned with ideal form. Perfection of proportion was the ever-sought Holy Grail; during the Renaissance, ideal proportion was equated with ideal beauty, and ideal beauty was equated with spiritual perfection. But *David*, despite its supremely calm and dignified pose, departs from these ideals. Michelangelo didn't give the statue perfect proportions. The head is slightly too large for the body, the arms are too large for the torso, and the hands are dramatically large for the arms. The work was originally commissioned to adorn the exterior of the Duomo and was intended to be seen from a distance and on high. Michelangelo knew exactly what he was doing, calculating that the perspective of the viewer would be such that, in order for the statue to appear proportioned, the upper body, head, and arms would have to be bigger, as they are farther away from the viewer. But he also did it to express and embody, as powerfully as possible in a single figure, an entire biblical story. David's hands *are* big, but so was Goliath, and these are the hands that slew him. Music lovers might want to check out the Museo degli Instrumenti Musicali contained within the Accademia; its Stradivarius is the main attraction. ✉ *Via Ricasoli 60, San Marco* ☎ 055/294883 *reservations, 055/2388609 gallery* 🌐 [www.polomuseale.firenze.it](http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it) 📄 €8; reservation fee €4 🕒 Closed Mon.

### **Giardino dei Semplici**

**GARDEN** | Created by Cosimo I in 1550, this delightful garden was designed by favorite Medici architect Niccolò Tribolo. Many of the plants here have been grown since the 16th century. Springtime, especially May, is a particularly beautiful time to visit, as multitudes of azaleas create a riot of color. ✉ *Via Pier Micheli 3, San Marco* ☎ 055/2756799 🌐 [www.ortobotanicoitalia.it](http://www.ortobotanicoitalia.it) 📄 €3 🕒 Closed Wed.

## ★ Mercato Centrale

**MARKET | FAMILY** | Some of the food at this huge, two-story market hall is remarkably exotic. The ground floor contains meat and cheese stalls, as well as some very good bars that have panini. In 2014, a second-floor food hall opened, eerily reminiscent of food halls everywhere. The quality of the food served, however, more than makes up for this. ✉ *Piazza del Mercato Centrale, San Lorenzo* 🌐 [www.mercatocentrale.it](http://www.mercatocentrale.it) 🕒 Closed Sun.

## Museo Archeologico (Archaeological Museum)

**MUSEUM** | Of the Etruscan, Egyptian, and Greco-Roman antiquities here, the Etruscan collection is particularly notable—one of the most important in Italy (the other being in Turin). The famous bronze *Chimera* was discovered (without the tail, which is a 16th-century reconstruction by Cellini). If you're traveling with kids, they might particularly enjoy the small mummy collection. Those with a fondness for gardens should visit on Saturday morning, when the tiny but eminently pleasurable garden is open for tours. ✉ *Piazza Santissima Annunziata 9/b, Santissima Annunziata* 📞 055/23575 🌐 [www.polomusealetoscana.beniculturali.it](http://www.polomusealetoscana.beniculturali.it) 🎫 €4 🕒 Closed 2d, 3rd, 4th, 5th Sun. of month.

## Museo dell'Opificio delle Pietre Dure

**MUSEUM** | Adjacent to this fascinating small museum is an *opificio*, or workshop, that Ferdinand I established in 1588 to train craftsmen in the art of working with precious and semiprecious stones and marble (*pietre dure* means hard stones). Four hundred-plus years later, the workshop is renowned as a center for the restoration of mosaics and inlays in semiprecious stones. The museum is highly informative, and includes some magnificent late Renaissance examples of this highly specialized and beautiful craft. ✉ *Via degli Alfani 78, San Marco* 📞 055/26511 🌐 [www.opificiodellepietredure.it](http://www.opificiodellepietredure.it) 🎫 €4 🕒 Closed Sun.

## Museo di Casa Martelli

**MUSEUM** | The wealthy Martelli family, long associated with the all-powerful Medici, lived, from the 16th century, in this palace on a quiet street near the basilica of San Lorenzo. The last Martelli died in 1986, and in October 2009 the *casa-museo* (house-museum) opened to the public. It's the only

nonreconstructed example of such a house in all of Florence, and for that reason alone it's worth a visit. The family collected art, and while most of the stuff is B-list, a couple of gems by Beccafumi, Salvatore Rosa, and Piero di Cosimo adorn the walls. Reservations are essential, and you will be shown the glories of this place by well-informed, English-speaking guides. ✉ *Via Zanetti 8, San Lorenzo* ☎ 055/294883 🌐 [www.bargellomusei.beniculturali.it](http://www.bargellomusei.beniculturali.it) 🕒 *Closed Mon.–Wed., Fri., and 1st, 3rd, and 5th Sun. of month.*

### Museo di San Marco

**MUSEUM** | A Dominican convent adjacent to the church of San Marco now houses this museum, which contains many stunning works by Fra Angelico (circa 1400–55), the Dominican friar famous for his piety as well as for his painting. When the friars' cells were restructured between 1439 and 1444, he decorated many of them with frescoes meant to spur religious contemplation. His unostentatious and direct paintings exalt the simple beauties of the contemplative life. Fra Angelico's works are everywhere, from the friars' cells to the superb panel paintings on view in the museum. Don't miss the famous *Annunciation*, on the upper floor, and the works in the gallery off the cloister as you enter. Here you can see his beautiful *Last Judgment*; as usual, the tortures of the damned are far more inventive and interesting than the pleasures of the redeemed. ✉ *Piazza San Marco 1, Florence* ☎ 055/294883 🌐 [www.polomuseale.firenze.it](http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it) 🎫 €4 🕒 *Closed 1st, 3rd, and 5th Sun., and 2nd and 4th Mon. of month.*

### Palazzo Medici-Riccardi

**CASTLE/PALACE** | The main attraction of this palace, begun in 1444 by Michelozzo for Cosimo de' Medici, is the interior chapel, the so-called **Cappella dei Magi** on the piano nobile. Painted on its walls is Benozzo Gozzoli's famous *Procession of the Magi*, finished in 1460 and celebrating both the birth of Christ and the greatness of the Medici family. Gozzoli wasn't a revolutionary painter, and today is considered by some not quite first-rate because of his technique, which was old-fashioned even for his day. Gozzoli's gift, however, was for entrancing the eye, not challenging the mind, and on those terms his success here is beyond question. Entering the chapel is like walking into the middle of a magnificently illustrated children's storybook, and this beauty makes it one of the most enjoyable rooms in the

city. Do note that officially only eight visitors are allowed in at a time for a maximum of seven minutes; sometimes, however, there are lenient guards. ✉ *Via Cavour 1, San Lorenzo* ☎ 055/2768224 🌐 [www.palazzomediciriccardi.it](http://www.palazzomediciriccardi.it) 🗳️ €7 🕒 Closed Wed.

## San Lorenzo

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | Filippo Brunelleschi designed this basilica, as well as that of Santo Spirito in the Oltrarno, in the 15th century. He never lived to see either finished. The two interiors are similar in design and effect. San Lorenzo, however, has a grid of dark, inlaid marble lines on the floor, which considerably heightens the dramatic effect. The grid makes the rigorous geometry of the interior immediately visible, and is an illuminating lesson on the laws of perspective. If you stand in the middle of the nave at the church entrance, on the line that stretches to the high altar, every element in the church—the grid, the nave columns, the side aisles, the coffered nave ceiling—seems to march inexorably toward a hypothetical vanishing point beyond the high altar, exactly as in a single-point-perspective painting. Brunelleschi's **Sagrestia Vecchia** (Old Sacristy) has stucco decorations by Donatello; it's at the end of the left transept. ✉ *Piazza San Lorenzo, Florence* 🗳️ €6 🕒 Closed Sun.

## Santa Maria Maddalena dei Pazzi

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | One of Florence's hidden treasures, a cool and composed *Crucifixion* by Perugino (circa 1445/50–1523), is in the chapter house of the monastery below this church. Here you can see the Virgin Mary and St. John the Evangelist with Mary Magdalene and Sts. Benedict and Bernard of Clairvaux posed against a simple but haunting landscape. The figure of Christ crucified occupies the center of this brilliantly hued fresco. Perugino's colors radiate—note the juxtaposition of the yellow-green cuff against the orange tones of Magdalene's robe. Entrance to this beautiful fresco is through the Liceo Michelangelo (a high school). ✉ *Via della Colonna 9, Santa Croce* 🗳️ Suggested donation €1 🕒 Closed Fri.–Mon. and Wed.

## Santissima Annunziata

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | Dating from the mid-13th century, this church was restructured in 1447 by Michelozzo, who gave it an uncommon (and lovely)

entrance cloister with frescoes by Andrea del Sarto (1486–1530), Pontormo (1494–1556), and Rosso Fiorentino (1494–1540). The interior is a rarity for Florence: an overwhelming example of Baroque. But it's not really a fair example, because it's merely 17th-century Baroque decoration applied willy-nilly to an earlier structure—exactly the sort of violent remodeling exercise that has given Baroque a bad name. The **Cappella dell'Annunziata**, immediately inside the entrance to the left, illustrates the point. The lower half, with its stately Corinthian columns and carved frieze bearing the Medici arms, was commissioned by Piero de' Medici in 1447; the upper half, with its erupting curves and impish sculpted cherubs, was added 200 years later. Fifteenth-century-fresco enthusiasts should also note the very fine *Holy Trinity with St. Jerome* in the second chapel on the left. Done by Andrea del Castagno (circa 1421–57), it shows a wiry and emaciated St. Jerome with Paula and Eustochium, two of his closest followers. ☒ *Piazza di Santissima Annunziata, Florence.*

### Spedale degli Innocenti

**MUSEUM** | The building built by Brunelleschi in 1419 to serve as an orphanage takes the historical prize as the very first Renaissance building. Brunelleschi designed its portico with his usual rigor, constructing it from the two shapes he considered mathematically (and therefore philosophically and aesthetically) perfect: the square and the circle. Below the level of the arches, the portico encloses a row of perfect cubes; above the level of the arches, the portico encloses a row of intersecting hemispheres. The entire geometric scheme is articulated with Corinthian columns, capitals, and arches borrowed directly from antiquity. At the time he designed the portico, Brunelleschi was also designing the interior of San Lorenzo, using the same basic ideas. But because the portico was finished before San Lorenzo, the Spedale degli Innocenti can claim the honor of ushering in Renaissance architecture. The 10 ceramic medallions depicting swaddled infants that decorate the portico are by Andrea della Robbia (1435–1525/28), done in about 1487.

Within the Spedale degli Innocenti is a small museum, or **Pinacoteca** (💰 €7; ☺ *Thurs.–Tues. 9–7*). Most of the objects are minor works by major artists, but well worth a look is Domenico Ghirlandaio's (1449–94) *Adorazione dei Magi* (*Adoration of the Magi*), executed in 1488. His use of color, and his eye

for flora and fauna, shows that art from north of the Alps made a great impression on him. ✉ *Piazza di Santissima Annunziata 12, Florence* ☎ 055/20371 🌐 [www.istitutodeglinnocenti.it](http://www.istitutodeglinnocenti.it) 🗂 €7.

## r Restaurants

### Alfio e Beppe

\$ | ITALIAN | Watch chickens roast over high flames as you decide which of the other delightful things you're going to eat with it. The beauty of this place is that it's open on Sunday when most things are not. **Known for:** roasted dishes; open Sunday; grilled vegetables. 💰 *Average main: €9* ✉ *Via Cavour 118–120/r, San Marco* ☎ 055/214108 🚫 *No credit cards* ☹ *Closed Sat.*

### ★ da Nerbone

\$ | TUSCAN | This *tavola calda* in the middle of the covered Mercato Centrale has been serving up food to Florentines who like their tripe since 1872. Tasty primi and secondi are available every day, but cognoscenti come for the *panino con il lampredotto* (tripe sandwich). **Known for:** tripe sandwich; frequented by locals; favorite dishes sell out. 💰 *Average main: €10* ✉ *Mercato San Lorenzo, Florence* ☎ 🚫 *No credit cards* ☹ *Closed Sun. No dinner.*

### ★ da Sergio

\$ | TUSCAN | Run by the Gozzi family for just over a hundred years, the food here is delicious, affordable, and just across the way from the basilica of San Lorenzo. The menu is short, and changes daily. **Known for:** local favorite; ever-changing menu; lunch only. 💰 *Average main: €13* ✉ *Piazza San Lorenzo 8/r, San Lorenzo* ☹ *Closed Sun. No dinner.*

### il Desco

\$\$ | TUSCAN | Owned by the Bargiacchi family, who are proprietors of the lovely hotel Guelfo Bianco just next door, their organic farm in the Tuscan countryside provides much of what is on the frequently changing menu. The menu plays to all tastes—Tuscan classics such as *peposo* (a hearty, black pepper-filled beef stew) can be found, as well as vegetarian dishes. **Known**



**for:** fine vegetarian and vegan dishes; just a few tables; clever wine list. ☑  
Average main: €16 ✉ Via Cavour 55/r, San Lorenzo ☎ 055/288330 🌐  
[www.ildescofirenze.it](http://www.ildescofirenze.it).

## La Mescita

\$ | TUSCAN | Come early (or late) to grab a seat at this tiny spot frequented by Florentine university students and businesspeople. Enjoy the day's *primi* (such as a terrific *lasagne*) and follow it with their *polpettone* (meat loaf) and tomato sauce. **Known for:** its longevity (it's been around since the 1920s); delicious pastas at rock-bottom prices; jovial staff. ☑ Average main: €9 ✉ Via degli Alfani 70/r, Florence ☎ 338/9922640 = No credit cards ☹ Closed Wed. No dinner.

## ★ Mario

\$ | TUSCAN | Florentines flock to this narrow family-run trattoria near San Lorenzo to feast on Tuscan favorites served at simple tables under a wooden ceiling dating from 1536. A distinct cafeteria feel and genuine Florentine hospitality prevail: you'll be seated wherever there's room, which often means with strangers. **Known for:** grilled meats; roasted potatoes; festive atmosphere. ☑ Average main: €13 ✉ Via Rosina 2/r, corner of Piazza del Mercato Centrale, San Lorenzo ☎ 055/218550 🌐 [www.trattoria-mario.com](http://www.trattoria-mario.com) ☹ Closed Sun. and Aug. No dinner.

## Pugi

\$ | PIZZA | Conveniently across the street from San Marco, Pugi sells the popular *pizza a taglio* (pizza by the slice); their *focaccine* and other breads are equally good. It's a great place to grab a quick lunch or snack. **Known for:** pizza by the slice; quick bite. ☑ Average main: €3 ✉ Piazza San Marco 9/b, San Marco ☎ 055/280981 🌐 [www.fornopugi.it](http://www.fornopugi.it) = No credit cards ☹ Closed Sun.

## ★ Taverna del Bronzino

\$\$ | TUSCAN | Located in the former studio of Santi di Tito, a student of Bronzino's, Taverna has a simple, formal decor, with white tablecloths and place settings. The classic, elegantly presented Tuscan food is superb, and the solid, affordable wine list rounds out the menu—especially because Stefano, the sommelier, really knows his stuff. **Known for:** creative menu; lots of

fish; wonderful sommelier. [💰] *Average main: €21* ✉ *Via delle Ruote 25/r, San Marco* ☎ *055/495220* 🌐 [www.tavernadelbronzino.net](http://www.tavernadelbronzino.net) 🕒 *Closed Sun. No lunch Sat.*

## h Hotels

### Antica Dimora Firenze

\$ | B&B/INN | Each simply furnished room in the intimate *residenza* is painted a different pastel color—peach, rose, powder-blue—while double-glazed windows ensure a peaceful night’s sleep. **Pros:** ample DVD library; honor bar with Antinori wines; complimentary coffee, tea, and fresh fruit available all day in the sitting room. **Cons:** staff goes home at 8 pm; no credit cards accepted; might be too removed for some. [💰] *Rooms from: €120* ✉ *Via San Gallo 72, San Marco* ☎ *055/4627296* 🌐 [www.antichedimorefiorentine.it](http://www.antichedimorefiorentine.it) 🚫 *No credit cards* ➡ *6 rooms* 🕒 *Free breakfast.*

### ★ Antica Dimora Johlea

\$\$ | B&B/INN | Lively color runs rampant on the top floor of this 19th-century palazzo, with a charming flower-filled rooftop terrace where you can sip a glass of wine while taking in a view of Brunelleschi’s cupola. **Pros:** great staff; cheerful rooms; honor bar. **Cons:** staff goes home at 7:30; narrow staircase to get to roof terrace; steps to breakfast room. [💰] *Rooms from: €140* ✉ *Via San Gallo 80, San Marco* ☎ *055/4633292* 🌐 [www.antichedimorefiorentine.it](http://www.antichedimorefiorentine.it) 🚫 *No credit cards* ➡ *6 rooms* 🕒 *Free breakfast.*

### Firenze Number Nine

\$\$\$\$ | HOTEL | Those wanting an elegant hotel with a walk-in gym in the historic center should look no further: swank reception rooms, vividly decorated, have comfortable couches to sink into, and works by contemporary artists adorn the walls. **Pros:** location; walk-in gym and spa; sumptuous breakfast. **Cons:** lots of street noise; breakfast costs extra. [💰] *Rooms from: €399* ✉ *del Conti 9, San Lorenzo* ☎ *055/293777* 🌐 [www.firenzenumbnine.com](http://www.firenzenumbnine.com) ➡ *45 rooms* 🕒 *No meals.*

## Florentine Sweet Treats I

Sweets-lovers have a bounty of gelato and pastry shops to choose from in Florence.

**Dolci e Dolcezze.** The  *pasticceria* (bakery) Dolci e Dolcezze, just off colorful Borgo La Croce, has the prettiest and tastiest cakes, sweets, and tarts in town. **Known for:** chocolate delicacies; fine savory breakfast treats; frequented by locals. ✉ *Piazza C. Beccaria 8/r, Sant’Ambrogio* 📞 055/2345458 🕒 *Closed Mon.*

**Gelateria Carabe.** Specializing in things Sicilian, this shop is known for its tart and flavorful *granità* (granular flavored ices), which are great thirst-quenchers. **Known for:** some of the best gelato around; close to the Accademia; no-frills shop. ✉ *Via Ricasoli 60/r, San Marco* 📞 055/289476 🌐 [www.parcocarabe.it](http://www.parcocarabe.it) 🚫 *No credit cards.*

**Gelateria La Carraia.** Those in the know contend that this might be the best gelateria show in town. The *limone ai biscotti* (a delicate lemon sorbet dotted with crumbled cookie) might well illustrate the point. **Known for:** funky flavor combinations; very popular; delicious chocolate. ✉ *Piazza, Nazario Sauro 25, Lungarno South* 📞 055/280695 🌐 [www.lacarraigroup.eu](http://www.lacarraigroup.eu).

**I Dolci di Patrizio Corsi.** Florentines with serious sweet teeth come to I Dolci di Patrizio Corsi, which has a deliciously bewildering selection of chocolate- and cream-filled pastries. **Known for:** walnut-stuffed pastries; cream-stuffed pastries; excellent coffee. ✉ *Borgo Albizi 15/r, Santa Croce* 📞 055/2480367 🕒 *Closed Sun. afternoon.*

**Vestri.** This shop is devoted to chocolate in all its guises. The small but sublime selection of chocolate-based gelati includes one with hot peppers. **Known for:** chocolate gelato; chocolates; hot chocolate with whipped cream. ✉ *Borgo Albizi 11/r, Santa Croce* 📞 055/2340374 🌐 [www.vestri.it](http://www.vestri.it) 🚫 *No credit cards.*

## Il Guelfo Bianco

\$\$ | HOTEL | The 15th-century building has all modern conveniences, but Renaissance charm still shines in the high-ceiling rooms. **Pros:** great staff; restaurant il Desco is on-site; sumptuous breakfast. **Cons:** rooms facing the street can be noisy; might be too removed for some; not all rooms are well lit. 💰 *Rooms from: €180* ✉ *Via Cavour 29, San Marco* 📞 055/288330 🌐

[www.ilguelfobianco.it](http://www.ilguelfobianco.it) ↗ 40 rooms 🍴 | Free breakfast.

### Residenza Johanna I

\$\$ | B&B/INN | Savvy travelers and those on a budget should look no further, as this *residenza* is a tremendous value for quality and location, and though it's very much in the centro storico, the place is rather homey. **Pros:** morning tea and coffee served in your room; in a quiet neighborhood; many great, inexpensive restaurants nearby. **Cons:** staff go home at 7 pm; no credit cards; might be too removed for some. 📄 Rooms from: €130 ✉ Via Bonifacio Lupi 14, San Marco ☎ 055/481896 🌐 [www.antichedimorefiorentine.it](http://www.antichedimorefiorentine.it) ↗ 10 rooms 🍴 | Free breakfast.

## n Nightlife

### Kitsch

BARS/PUBS | Choose from indoor or outdoor seating and take advantage of the great list of wines by the glass. At aperitivo time €12 will buy you a truly tasty cocktail and give you access to the tremendous buffet; it's so good, you won't need dinner afterward—in fact, they called it “Apericena.” That means, roughly, drink and dinner. ✉ Via San Gallo 22/r, San Marco ☎ 055/3841358 🌐 [www.kitschfirenze.com](http://www.kitschfirenze.com).

## b Shopping

### furò e punteruolo

SHOES/LUGGAGE/LEATHER GOODS | Paolo Fattori and his wife Luisa craft by hand exquisite, one-of-a-kind bags and other leather goods at this one-room store and workshop. ✉ Via del Giglio 29/r, Florence ☎ 348/4370867 🕒 Closed Sun. except in high season.

### ★ Mercato Centrale

FOOD/CANDY | FAMILY | This huge indoor food market offers a staggering selection of all things edible. Downstairs is full of vendors hawking their wares—meat, fish, fruit, vegetables; upstairs (daily 8 am–midnight) is full of

food stalls offering up the best of what Italy has to offer. ✉ *Piazza del Mercato Centrale, San Lorenzo* 🌐 [www.mercatocentrale.it](http://www.mercatocentrale.it) ⌄ *Downstairs closed Sun., and after 2 pm Mon.–Sat.*

### **Mercato di San Lorenzo**

**OUTDOOR/FLEA/GREEN MARKETS | FAMILY** | The clothing and leather-goods stalls of the Mercato di San Lorenzo in the streets next to the church of San Lorenzo have bargains for shoppers on a budget. ✉ *Florence.*

### ★ **Penko**

**JEWELRY/ACCESSORIES** | Renaissance goldsmiths provide the inspiration for this dazzling jewelry with a contemporary feel. ✉ *Via dell'Oca 20–22/r, Duomo* 📞 055/2052577 🌐 [www.paolopenko.com](http://www.paolopenko.com).

### **via de'Ginori 23/r**

**LOCAL SPECIALTIES** | Family-run and operated, this shop sells beautifully handcrafted leather things just down the street from the basilica of San Lorenzo. ✉ *Via de'Ginori 23/r, Florence* 📞 055/2398031.

# Santa Maria Novella

Piazza Santa Maria Novella is a gorgeous, pedestrian-only square, with grass (laced with roses) and plenty of places to sit and rest your feet. The streets in and around the piazza have their share of architectural treasures, including some of Florence's most tasteful palaces. Between Santa Maria Novella and the Arno is Via Tornabuoni, Florence's swankiest shopping street.

## S Sights

### Colonna della Giustizia

**PUBLIC ART** | In the center of **Piazza Santa Trinita** is this column from Rome's Terme di Caracalla, given to the Medici grand duke Cosimo I by Pope Pius IV in 1560. Typical of Medici self-assurance, the name translates as the Column of Justice. ☒ *Piazza Santa Trinita, Santa Maria Novella.*

### Croce al Trebbio

**NEIGHBORHOOD** | In 1338 the Dominican friars (the Dominican church of Santa Maria Novella is down the street) erected this little granite column near Piazza Santa Maria Novella to commemorate a famous local victory: it was here in 1244 that they defeated their avowed enemies, the Patarene heretics, in a bloody street brawl. ☒ *Via del Trebbio, Santa Maria Novella.*

## Meet the Medici S

The Medici were the dominant family of Renaissance Florence, wielding political power and financing some of the world's greatest art. You'll see their names at every turn around the city. These are some of the more notable family members:

**Cosimo il Vecchio** (1389–1464), incredibly wealthy banker to the popes, was the first in the family line to act as de facto ruler of Florence. He was a great patron of the arts and architecture; he was the moving force behind the family palace and the Dominican complex of San Marco.

**Lorenzo il Magnifico** (1449–92), grandson of Cosimo il Vecchio, presided over a Florence largely at peace with her neighbors. A collector of cameos, a writer of sonnets, and a lover of ancient texts, he was the preeminent Renaissance man and, like his grandfather, the de facto ruler of Florence.

**Leo X** (1475–1521), also known as Giovanni de' Medici, became the first Medici pope, helping extend the family power base to include Rome and the Papal States. His reign was characterized by a host of problems, the biggest one being a former friar named Martin Luther.

**Catherine de' Medici** (1519–89) was married by her great uncle Pope Clement VII to Henry of Valois, who later became Henry II of France. Wife of one king and mother of three, she was the first Medici to marry into European royalty. Lorenzo il Magnifico, her great-grandfather, would have been thrilled.

**Cosimo I** (1537–74), the first grand duke of Tuscany, should not be confused with his ancestor Cosimo il Vecchio.

## Le Cascine

**CITY PARK** | In the 16th century this vast park belonged to the Medici, who used it for hunting, one of their favorite pastimes. It was opened to the public in the 19th century. The park runs for nearly 3 km (2 miles) along the Arno and has roughly 291 acres. It's ideal for strolling on sunny days, and there are paths for jogging, allées perfect for biking, grassy fields for picnicking, and lots of space for rollerblading (as well as a place to rent skates). At the northern tip of the park is the **Piazzaleto dell'Indiano**, an oddly moving monument dedicated to Rajaram Cuttraputti, Marajah of Kolepoor, who died in Florence in 1870. The park hosts sports enthusiasts, a weekly open-air market, and discotheques. But be warned: at night there's a booming sex-for-sale trade. ✉ *Main entrance: Piazza Vittorio Veneto, Viale Fratelli Roselli (at Ponte della Vittoria), Florence.*

## Museo Marino Marini

**MUSEUM** | A 21-foot-tall bronze horse and rider, one of the major works by artist Marini (1901–80), dominates the space of the main gallery here. The museum itself is an eruption of contemporary space in a deconsecrated 9th-century church, designed with a series of open stairways, walkways, and

balconies that allow you to peer at Marini's work from all angles. In addition to his Etruscanesque sculpture, the museum houses Marini's paintings, drawings, and engravings. ✉ *Piazza San Pancrazio, Santa Maria Novella* 📞 055/219432 🌐 [www.museomarinomarini.it](http://www.museomarinomarini.it) 📧 €6.

### **Museo Novecento**

**MUSEUM** | It began life as a 13th-century Franciscan hostel offering shelter to tired pilgrims. It later became a convalescent home, and in the late 18th century it was a school for poor girls. Now the former Ospedale di San Paolo houses a museum devoted to Italian art of the 20th century. Most of these artists are not exactly household names, but the museum is so beautifully done that it's worth a visit. The second floor contains works by artists from the second half of the century; start on the third floor and go directly to the collection of Alberto della Ragione, a naval engineer determined to be on the cutting edge of art collecting. ✉ *Piazza Santa Maria Novella 10, Santa Maria Novella* 📞 055/286132 🌐 [www.museonovecento.it](http://www.museonovecento.it) 📧 €9.

### **Museo Salvatore Ferragamo**

**MUSEUM** | Almost like a shrine to footwear, the shoes in this dramatically displayed collection were designed by Salvatore Ferragamo (1898–1960) beginning in the early 20th century. Born in southern Italy, Ferragamo jump-started his career in Hollywood by creating shoes for the likes of Mary Pickford and Rudolph Valentino. He then returned to Florence and set up shop in the 13th-century Palazzo Spini Feroni. The collection includes about 16,000 shoes, and those on exhibition are frequently rotated. Special exhibitions are also mounted here and are well worth visiting—past shows have been devoted to Audrey Hepburn, Greta Garbo, and Marilyn Monroe. ✉ *Via dei Tornabuoni 2, Santa Maria Novella* 📞 055/3562846 🌐 [www.ferragamo.com](http://www.ferragamo.com) 📧 €8.

### **Museo Stibbert**

**MUSEUM** | Federico Stibbert (1838–1906), born in Florence to an Italian mother and an English father, liked to collect things. Over a lifetime of doing so, he amassed some 50,000 objects. This museum, which was also his home, displays many of them. He had a fascination with medieval armor and also collected costumes, particularly Uzbek costumes, which are exhibited in a



room called the Moresque Hall. These are mingled with an extensive collection of swords, guns, and other devices whose sole function was to kill people. The paintings, most of which date from the 15th century, are largely second-rate. The house itself is an interesting amalgam of neo-Gothic, Renaissance, and English eccentric. To get here, take Bus No. 4 (across the street from the station at Santa Maria Novella) and get off at the stop marked “Fabbroni 4,” then follow signs to the museum. ✉ *Via Federico Stibbert 26, Florence* ☎ 055/486049 🌐 [www.museostibbert.it](http://www.museostibbert.it) 🎫 €8 🕒 Closed Thurs., Jan. 1, Easter, May 1, Aug. 15, and Dec. 25.

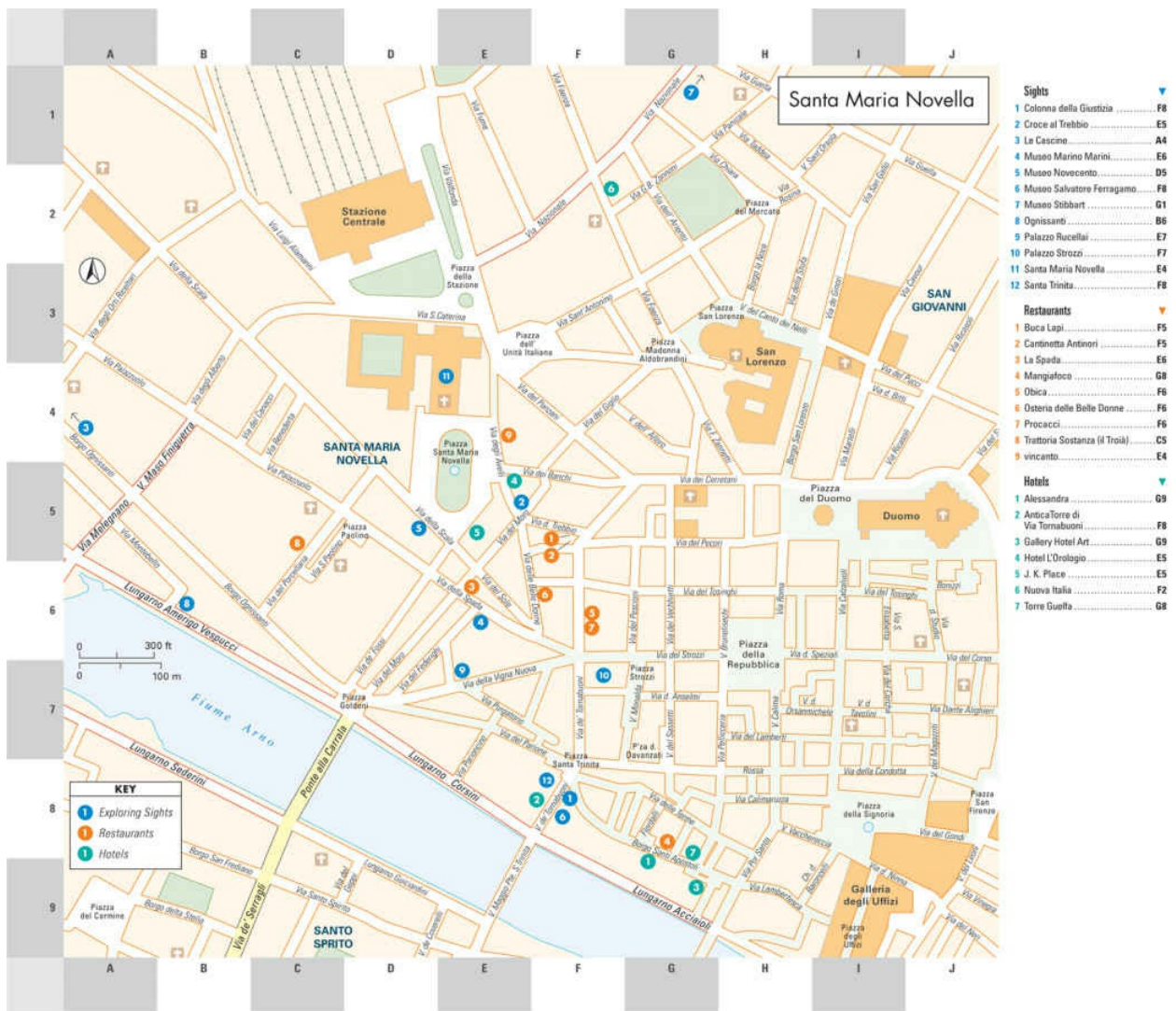
## Ognissanti

**PUBLIC ART** | The Umiliati owned this architectural hodgepodge of a church before the Franciscans took it over in the mid-16th century. Beyond the fanciful Baroque facade by Matteo Nigetti (1560–1649) are a couple of wonderful 15th-century gems. On the right in the nave is the *Madonna della Misericordia* by Ghirlandaio; a little farther down is Botticelli’s *St. Augustine in His Study*. A companion piece, directly across the way, is Ghirlandaio’s *St. Jerome*. Also worth seeing is the wooden crucifix by Giotto: the colors dazzle. Pass through the rather dreadfully frescoed cloister to view Ghirlandaio’s superb *Last Supper*. ✉ *Piazza Ognissanti, Santa Maria Novella* ☎ 055/2398700 🎫 Church free; donation requested for the *Last Supper*.

## Palazzo Rucellai

**CASTLE/PALACE** | Architect Leon Battista Alberti (1404–72) designed perhaps the very first private residence inspired by antique models—which goes a step further than the Palazzo Strozzi. A comparison between the two is illuminating. Evident on the facade of the Palazzo Rucellai, dating between 1455 and 1470, is the ordered arrangement of windows and rusticated stonework seen on the Palazzo Strozzi, but Alberti’s facade is far less forbidding. Alberti devoted a far larger proportion of his wall space to windows, which lighten the facade’s appearance, and filled in the remainder with rigorously ordered classical elements borrowed from antiquity. The result, though still severe, is less fortresslike, and Alberti strove for this effect purposely (he is on record as saying that only tyrants need fortresses). Ironically, the Palazzo Rucellai was built some 30 years *before* the Palazzo

Strozzis. Alberti’s civilizing ideas here, it turned out, had little influence on the Florentine palazzi that followed. To Renaissance Florentines, power—in architecture, as in life—was equally as impressive as beauty. While you are admiring the facade (the palazzo isn’t open to the public), turn around and look at the Loggia dei Rucellai across the street. Built in 1463–66, it was the private “terrace” of the Rucellai family, in-laws to the Medici. Its soaring heights and grand arches are a firm testament to the family’s status and wealth. ☒ *Via della Vigna Nuova, Santa Maria Novella.*



## Gardens Around Florence S

**Villa Demidoff.** Francesco I de' Medici commissioned the multitalented Bernardo Buontalenti in 1568 to build a villa and a grandiose park (Parco di Pratolino) to accompany it. The park, particularly the colossal and whimsical sculpture of the *Fontana dell'Appenino* (*Fountain of the Appenines*), executed by Giambologna in 1579–89, is worth a visit. Besides providing a nice excursion from Florence, the villa is an excellent picnic spot.

To get here by car, head north from Florence on the SR65 toward Pratolino and follow signs to the villa. Or take Bus 25 from Piazza San Marco and get off at Pratolino. ✉ *Località Pratolino, Vaglia* 📞 055/4080721 🌐 [www.cittametropolitana.fi.it](http://www.cittametropolitana.fi.it) 🚏 Free 🕒 Closed Mon.–Thurs. and Nov.–Mar.

**Villa di Castello.** Villa di Castello was bought in 1477 by Lorenzo and Giovanni di Pierfrancesco de' Medici and restructured by Cosimo I in the 16th century. The Grotta degli Animali displays sculpted animals by Giambologna. Allow about 45 minutes to visit the garden.

To get to Villa di Castello by car, head northwest from Florence on Via Reginaldo Giuliani (also known as Via Sestese) to Castello, about 6 km (4 miles) northwest of the city center in the direction of Sesto Fiorentino; follow signs to Villa di Castello. Or take Bus 28 from the city center and tell the driver you want to get off at Villa di Castello; from the stop, walk north about ½ km (¼ mile) up the alley. (Hours and opening times are highly variable; call ahead to verify.) ✉ *Via di Castello 47, Castello* 📞 055/454791 🚏 Free.

**Villa La Petraia.** The gardens of Villa La Petraia sit high above the Arno. The villa was built around a medieval tower and reconstructed after it was purchased by the Medici sometime after 1530. Allow 60 minutes to explore the park and gardens, plus 30 minutes for the guided tour of the villa interior.

To get here by car, follow directions to Villa di Castello, but take the right off Via Reginaldo Giuliani, following the sign for Villa La Petraia. You can walk from Villa di Castello to Villa La Petraia in about 15 minutes; turn left beyond the gate of Villa di Castello and continue straight along Via di Castello and the imposing Villa Corsini; take Via della Petraia uphill to the entrance. ✉ *Via della Petraia 40, Castello* 📞 055/451208 🚏 Free 🕒 Closed 2nd and 3rd Mon. of month.

**Villa Gamberaia.** Villa Gamberaia was the 15th-century country home of Matteo di Domenico Gamberelli, the father of Renaissance sculptors Bernardo, Antonio, and Matteo Rossellino. This excursion takes about 1½ hours.

To get here by car, head east on Via Aretina, an extension of Via Gioberti, which is picked up at

Piazza Beccaria; follow the sign to the turnoff to the north to Villa Gamberaia, about 8 km (5 miles) from the center. To go by bus, take Bus 10 to Settignano. From Settignano's main Piazza Tommaseo, walk east on Via di San Romano; the second lane on the right is Via del Rossellino, which leads southeast to the entrance of Villa Gamberaia. The walk from the piazza takes about 10 minutes. Though booking is not essential, it would be prudent to do so. ✉ *Via del Rossellino 72, near Settignano, Fiesole* ☎ 055/697205 🌐 [www.villagamberaia.com](http://www.villagamberaia.com) 📧 €20.

## Palazzo Strozzi

**HOUSE** | The Strozzi family built this imposing palazzo in an attempt to outshine the nearby Palazzo Medici. Based on a model by Giuliano da Sangallo (circa 1452–1516) dating from around 1489 and executed between 1489 and 1504 under il Cronaca (1457–1508) and Benedetto da Maiano (1442–97), it was inspired by Michelozzo’s earlier Palazzo Medici-Riccardi. The palazzo’s exterior is simple, severe, and massive: it’s a testament to the wealth of a patrician, 15th-century Florentine family. The interior courtyard, entered from the rear of the palazzo, is another matter altogether. It is here that the classical vocabulary—columns, capitals, pilasters, arches, and cornices—is given uninhibited and powerful expression. The palazzo frequently hosts blockbuster art shows. ✉ *Via Tornabuoni, Piazza della Repubblica* 📞 055/2645155 🌐 [www.palazzostrozzi.org](http://www.palazzostrozzi.org) 🎫 *Free.*

## Santa Maria Novella

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | The facade of this church looks distinctly clumsy by later Renaissance standards, and with good reason: it is an architectural hybrid. The lower half was completed mostly in the 14th century; its pointed-arch niches and decorative marble patterns reflect the Gothic style of the day. About 100 years later (around 1456), architect Leon Battista Alberti was called in to complete the job. The marble decoration of his upper story clearly defers to the already existing work below, but the architectural motifs he added evince an entirely different style. The central doorway, the four ground-floor half-columns with Corinthian capitals, the triangular pediment atop the second story, the inscribed frieze immediately below the pediment—these are borrowings from antiquity, and they reflect the new Renaissance style in architecture, born some 35 years earlier at the Spedale degli Innocenti. Alberti’s most important addition—the S-curve scrolls (called volutes) surmounting the decorative circles on either side of the upper story—had no precedent whatsoever in antiquity. The problem was to soften the abrupt transition between wide ground floor and narrow upper story. Alberti’s solution turned out to be definitive. Once you start to look for them, you will find scrolls such as these (or sculptural variations of them) on churches all over Italy, and every one of them derives from Alberti’s example here.

The architecture of the interior is, like that of the Duomo, a dignified but somber example of Florentine Gothic. Exploration is essential, however, because the church's store of art treasures is remarkable. Highlights include the 14th-century stained-glass rose window depicting the *Coronation of the Virgin* (above the central entrance); the Cappella Filippo Strozzi (to the right of the altar), containing late-15th-century frescoes and stained glass by Filippino Lippi; the *cappella maggiore* (the area around the high altar), displaying frescoes by Ghirlandaio; and the Cappella Gondi (to the left of the altar), containing Filippo Brunelleschi's famous wood crucifix, carved around 1410 and said to have so stunned the great Donatello when he first saw it that he dropped a basket of eggs.

Of special interest for its great historical importance and beauty is Masaccio's *Trinity*, on the left-hand wall, almost halfway down the nave. Painted around 1426–27 (at the same time he was working on his frescoes in Santa Maria del Carmine), it unequivocally announced the arrival of the Renaissance. The realism of the figure of Christ was revolutionary in itself, but what was probably even more startling to contemporary Florentines was the barrel vault in the background. The mathematical rules for employing single-point perspective in painting had just been discovered (probably by Brunelleschi), and this was one of the first works of art to employ them with utterly convincing success.

In the first cloister is a faded and damaged fresco cycle by Paolo Uccello depicting tales from Genesis, with a dramatic vision of the Deluge (at this writing, in restoration). Earlier and better-preserved frescoes painted in 1348–55 by Andrea da Firenze are in the chapter house, or the **Cappellone degli Spagnoli** (Spanish Chapel), off the cloister. ✉ *Piazza Santa Maria Novella 19, Florence* ☎ 055/219257 museo 🌐 [www.smn.it/en](http://www.smn.it/en) 🏠 €8 🕒 Closed Sun. morning.

## Santa Trinita

RELIGIOUS SITE | Started in the 11th century by Vallombrosian monks and originally Romanesque in style, the church underwent a Gothic remodeling during the 14th century. (Remains of the Romanesque construction are visible on the interior front wall.) The major works are the fresco cycle and altarpiece in the Cappella Sassetti, the second to the high altar's right, painted

by Ghirlandaio between 1480 and 1485. His work here possesses such graceful decorative appeal as well as a proud depiction of his native city (most of the cityscapes show 15th-century Florence in all her glory). The wall frescoes illustrate scenes from the life of St. Francis, and the altarpiece, depicting the *Adoration of the Shepherds*, veritably glows. ✉ *Piazza Santa Trinita, Santa Maria Novella* 🕒 *Closed Sun. 10:45–4.*

## r Restaurants

### Buca Lapi

\$\$\$\$ | TUSCAN | The Antinori family started selling wine from their palace's basement in the 15th century and 600 years later, this *buca* (hole) is a lively, subterranean restaurant filled with Florentine aristocrats chowing down on what might be the best (and most expensive) bistecca fiorentina in town. The classical Tuscan menu has the usual suspects: *crostino di cavolo nero* (black cabbage on toasted garlic bread), along with ribollita and pappa al pomodoro. **Known for:** gargantuan bistecca fiorentina; adherence to Tuscan classics; pet-friendly. 💰 *Average main: €40* ✉ *Via del Trebbio 1, Santa Maria Novella* 📞 *055/213768* 🌐 [www.bucalapi.com](http://www.bucalapi.com) 🕒 *Closed Sun.*

### Cantinetta Antinori

\$\$\$ | TUSCAN | After a morning of shopping on Via Tornabuoni, stop for lunch in this 15th-century palazzo in the company of Florentine ladies and men who come to see and be seen over lunch. The panache of the food matches its clientele: expect treats such as *tramezzino con pane di campagna al tartufo* (country pâté with truffles served on bread) and the *insalata di gamberoni e gamberetti con carciofi freschi* (crayfish and prawn salad with shaved raw artichokes). **Known for:** chic clientele; most ingredients come from the family farm; high prices to match the excellent food and wine. 💰 *Average main: €27* ✉ *Piazza Antinori 3, Santa Maria Novella* 📞 *055/292234* 🌐 [www.cantinetta-antinori.com](http://www.cantinetta-antinori.com) 🕒 *Closed Sun., 20 days in Aug., and Dec. 25–Jan. 6.*

### La Spada

\$ | ITALIAN | Near Santa Maria Novella is La Spada. Walk in and inhale the

fragrant aromas of meats cooking in the wood-burning oven. **Known for:** grilled meats; adherence to Tuscan cuisine; aromatic pastas. [💰] *Average main: €13* ✉ *Via del Moro 66/r, Santa Maria Novella* ☎ *055/218757* = *No credit cards.*

### ★ Mangiafoco

\$\$ | TUSCAN | Created by Francesco and Elisa in 2001, this small, brightly painted spot in the heart of the centro storico on a romantic medieval side street, serves Tuscan classics *con fantasia* (with fantasy) created by Luca, Elisa's brother. The menu changes daily, reflecting both what's in season and the whims of the chef. **Known for:** phenomenal wines by the glass and by the bottle; creative, seasonal menu changes daily; great service. [💰] *Average main: €16* ✉ *Borgo Santi Apostoli 26/r, Santa Maria Novella* ☎ *055/2658170* 🌐 [www.mangiafoco.com](http://www.mangiafoco.com).

### Obicà

\$\$ | ITALIAN | Mozzarella takes center stage at this sleek eatery on Florence's swankiest street. The cheese, along with its culinary cousin *burrata* (a fresh cheese filled with cream), arrives daily from southern Italy to become the centerpiece for various salads and pastas. **Known for:** mozzarella-laden menu; outstanding pizza and desserts; nightly happy hour and outdoor seating in nice weather. [💰] *Average main: €18* ✉ *Via Tornabuoni 16, Santa Maria Novella* ☎ *055/2773526* 🌐 [www.obica.com](http://www.obica.com).

### Osteria delle Belle Donne

\$ | TUSCAN | Down the street from the church of Santa Maria Novella, this gaily decorated spot, festooned with ropes of garlic and other vegetables, has an ever-changing menu and stellar service led by the irrepressible Giacinto. The menu offers Tuscan standards, but shakes things up with alternatives such as *sedani con bacon, verza, e uova* (thick noodles sauced with bacon, cabbage, and egg); when avocados are ripe, they're on the menu, too (either with cold boiled shrimp or expertly grilled chicken breast). **Known for:** seasonal ingredients; many dishes not typical of Tuscany; dessert. [💰] *Average main: €13* ✉ *Via delle Belle Donne 16/r, Santa Maria Novella* ☎ *055/2382609* 🌐 [www.casatrattoria.com](http://www.casatrattoria.com).

### ★ Procacci



\$\$ | ITALIAN | At this classy Florentine institution dating to 1885, try one of the panini tartufati and swish it down with a glass of prosecco. **Known for:** pane tartufato; excellent wines by the glass; serene space. [📍] Average main: €15 [✉] Via Tornabuoni 64/r, Santa Maria Novella [📞] 055/211656 [🌐] [www.procacci1885.it](http://www.procacci1885.it).

### ★ Trattoria Sostanza (il Troia)

\$\$ | TUSCAN | Since opening its doors in 1869, this trattoria has been serving top-notch, unpretentious food to Florentines who like their bistecca fiorentina very large and very rare. Along with fine Tuscan classics, they have two signature dishes: the *tortino di carciofi* (artichoke tart) and the *pollo al burro* (chicken with butter). **Known for:** Tuscan classics; delicious desserts; no-frills decor. [📍] Average main: €15 [✉] Via della Porcellana 25, Santa Maria Novella [📞] 055/212691 [🚫] No credit cards.

### vincanto

\$\$ | ITALIAN | It opens at 11 am, and closes at midnight: this is a rarity in Florentine dining. They do a little bit of everything here, including fine pastas (don't miss the *ignudi*), salads, and pizze, but the burgers shine. **Known for:** view of Piazza Santa Maria Novella; open early to late; burgers. [📍] Average main: €17 [✉] Piazza, Santa Maria Novella 23/r, Santa Maria Novella [📞] 055/269300 [🌐] [www.ristorantevincanto.com](http://www.ristorantevincanto.com).

## Salumerie I

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*Salumerie*, specialty food shops similar to delis, are strong on fine fresh ingredients such as meats and cheeses. They're great places to assemble a picnic lunch.

**Antico Salumificio Anzuini.** This salumeria shrink-wraps their own pork products, making it a snap to take home some *salame di cinghiale* (wild boar salami). **Known for:** high-quality pork products; exceptional prosciutto; their bistecca fiorentina. [✉] Via de' Neri 84/r, Santa Croce [📞] 055/294901 [🌐] [www.salumificioanzuini.it](http://www.salumificioanzuini.it) [🚫] No credit cards.

**Baroni.** The cheese collection at Baroni may be the most comprehensive in Florence. They also have high-quality truffle products, vinegars, and other delicacies. **Known for:** expansive cheese

selection; top-notch foodstuff; products packed for shipping. ✉ *Mercato Centrale, enter at Via Signa, San Lorenzo* 📞 055/289576 🌐 [www.baronialimentari.it](http://www.baronialimentari.it).

**'ino.** Serving arguably the best panini in town, proprietor Alessandro sources only the very best ingredients. Located right behind the Uffizi, 'ino is a perfect place to grab a tasty sandwich and glass of wine before forging on to the next museum. **Known for:** the bread; interesting ingredient combinations; sourcing the best ingredients. ✉ *Via dei Georgofili 3/r-7/r, Piazza della Signoria* 📞 055/214154 🌐 [www.inofirenze.com](http://www.inofirenze.com).

**Pegna.** Looking for some cheddar cheese to pile in your panino? Pegna has been selling both Italian and non-Italian food since 1860. **Known for:** gourmet supermarket; international foodstuffs; food on the go. ✉ *Via dello Studio 8, Duomo* 📞 055/282701 🌐 [www.pegna.it](http://www.pegna.it).

**Perini.** It's possible to break the bank here, as this might be the best salumeria in Florence. Perini sells prosciutto, mixed meats, sauces for pasta, and a wide assortment of antipasti. **Known for:** exceptional quality of products; meatballs; jovial staff. ✉ *Mercato Centrale, enter at Via dell'Aretino, San Lorenzo* 📞 055/2398306 🕒 *Closed Sun.*

## h Hotels

### Alessandra

\$\$ | B&B/INN | An aura of grandeur pervades these clean, ample rooms a block from the Ponte Vecchio. **Pros:** several rooms have views of the Arno; the spacious suite is a bargain; tiny terrace allows for solitude while sipping a glass of wine. **Cons:** stairs to elevator; two rooms do not have en suite baths. 💰 *Rooms from: €160* ✉ *Borgo Santi Apostoli 17, Santa Maria Novella* 📞 055/283438 🌐 [www.hotelalessandra.com](http://www.hotelalessandra.com) 🕒 *Closed Dec. 10-28* ➡ *30 rooms, 28 with bath* 🍷 | *Free breakfast.*

### Antica Torre di Via Tornabuoni

\$\$\$\$ | B&B/INN | If you're looking for a room with a view you'll find it here, where just about every room looks out onto the awe-inspiring Duomo or the Arno (some even have small terraces). **Pros:** views of the Arno and Duomo; tasteful decor; rooftop terrace. **Cons:** no staff after 7 pm. 💰 *Rooms from: €385* ✉ *Via Tornabuoni 1, Santa Maria Novella* 📞 055/2658161 🌐

[www.tornabuoni1.com](http://www.tornabuoni1.com) ↗ 24 rooms 🌐 | Free breakfast.

### Gallery Hotel Art

\$\$\$\$ | HOTEL | High design resides at this art showcase near the Ponte Vecchio, where sleek, uncluttered rooms are dressed mostly in neutrals and luxe touches, such as leather headboards and kimono robes, abound. **Pros:** trendy atmosphere; artistic touches; the in-house Fusion Bar serves delightful cocktails. **Cons:** some street noise; books up quickly. 💰 Rooms from: €517  
✉ Vicolo dell'Oro 5, Santa Maria Novella 📞 055/27263 🌐  
[www.lungarnocollection.com](http://www.lungarnocollection.com) ↗ 74 rooms 🌐 | Free breakfast.

### Hotel L'Orologio

\$\$\$ | HOTEL | The owner of this quietly understated, elegant hotel has a real passion for watches, which is why he chose to name his hotel after them (and why you will see them throughout the property). **Pros:** location; great staff; stunning breakfast room. **Cons:** some folks think it's too close to the train station; gets the occasional tour group; holds conferences from time to time.  
💰 Rooms from: €268 ✉ Piazza Santa Maria Novella 24, Santa Maria Novella 📞 055/277380 🌐 [www.hotelorologioflorence.com](http://www.hotelorologioflorence.com) ↗ 52 rooms 🌐 | Free breakfast.

### ★ JK Place

\$\$\$\$ | HOTEL | Hard to spot from the street, this sumptuous place provides all the comforts of a luxe home away from home—expect soothing earth tones in the guest rooms, free minibars, crisp linens, and room service offering organic dishes. **Pros:** private, intimate feel; stellar staff; small dogs allowed. **Cons:** breakfast at a shared table; books up quickly; might be too trendy for some. 💰 Rooms from: €550 ✉ Piazza Santa Maria Novella 7, Florence 📞 055/2645181 🌐 [www.jkplace.com](http://www.jkplace.com) ↗ 20 rooms 🌐 | Free breakfast.

### Nuova Italia

\$\$ | HOTEL | FAMILY | The genial Viti family oversees these clean and simple rooms near the train station and well within walking distance of the sights. **Pros:** reasonable rates; close to everything. **Cons:** no elevator; the neighborhood is highly trafficked. 💰 Rooms from: €129 ✉ Via Faenza 26, Santa Maria Novella 📞 055/268430 🌐 [www.hotel-nuovaitalia.com](http://www.hotel-nuovaitalia.com) 🕒 Closed

Dec. 20–Dec. 27 ↗ 20 rooms 🏠 Free breakfast.

## Torre Guelfa

\$\$ | B&B/INN | If you want a taste of medieval Florence, try one of these character-filled guest rooms—some with canopied beds, some with balconies—housed within a 13th-century tower. **Pros:** rooftop terrace with tremendous views; wonderful staff; some family-friendly triple and quadruple rooms. **Cons:** 72 steps to get to the terrace; some street noise. 💰 Rooms from: €199  
✉ Borgo Santi Apostoli 8, Santa Maria Novella ☎ 055/2396338 🌐  
[www.hoteltorreguelfa.com](http://www.hoteltorreguelfa.com) ↗ 31 rooms 🏠 Free breakfast.

## p Performing Arts

### Maggio Musicale Fiorentino

MUSIC | After some delay due to funding issues, a new music hall opened in 2014; the area is called the Parco della Musica (Music Park), and was designed by Paolo Desideri and associates. Three concert halls (two indoor, one outdoor) are planned, and only one has been completed. Maggio Musicale has taken up residence there, and continues to hold forth at the Teatro Comunale (✉ Corso Italia 16, Lungarno North ☎ 055/287222 🌐 [www.maggiofiorentino.com](http://www.maggiofiorentino.com)). Within Italy you can purchase tickets from late April through July directly at the box office or by phone (☎ 055/2779309). You can also buy them online. ✉ Via Alamanni 39, Florence ☎ 055/2001278 🌐 [www.operadifirenze.it](http://www.operadifirenze.it).

### OBIHALL

FESTIVALS | This large exhibition space, formerly Teatro Saschall, hosts many events throughout the year, including a large Christmas bazaar run by the Red Cross, visiting rock stars, and trendy bands from all over Europe. ✉ Lungarno Aldo Moro 3, Santa Maria Novella ☎ 055/6504112 🌐 [www.obihall.it](http://www.obihall.it).

## b Shopping

## Alberto Cozzi

BOOKS/STATIONERY | You'll find an extensive line of Florentine papers and paper products here. The artisans in the shop rebind and restore books and works on paper. Their hours are tricky, so it's best to call first before stopping by. ✉ *Via del Parione 35/r, Santa Maria Novella* ☎ 055/294968.

## ★ Angela Caputi

JEWELRY/ACCESSORIES | Angela Caputi wows Florentine cognoscenti with her highly creative, often outsize plastic jewelry. A small, but equally creative, collection of women's clothing made of fine fabrics is also on offer. ✉ *Borgo Santi Apostoli 44/46, Florence* ☎ 055/212972 🌐 [www.angelacaputi.com](http://www.angelacaputi.com).

## Antica Officina del Farmacista Dr. Vranjes

HOUSEHOLD ITEMS/FURNITURE | Dr. Vranjes elevates aromatherapy to an art form, with scents for the body and home. ✉ *Via della Spada 9, Florence* ☎ 055/288796 🌐 [www.drvranches.it](http://www.drvranches.it).

## Casadei

SHOES/LUGGAGE/LEATHER GOODS | Find classic, fine leather women's shoes and bags. ✉ *Via Tornabuoni 74/r, Santa Maria Novella* ☎ 055/287240 🌐 [www.casadei.com](http://www.casadei.com).

## Cellerini

SHOES/LUGGAGE/LEATHER GOODS | In a city where it seems just about everybody wears an expensive leather jacket, Cellerini is an institution. ✉ *Via del Sole 37/r, Santa Maria Novella* ☎ 055/282533 🌐 [www.cellerini.it](http://www.cellerini.it).

## Emilio Pucci

CLOTHING | The aristocratic Marchese di Barsento, Emilio Pucci, became an international name in the late 1950s when the stretch ski clothes he designed for himself caught on with the *dolce vita* crowd—his pseudopsychedelic prints and “palazzo pajamas” became all the rage. ✉ *Via Tornabuoni 20–22/r, Santa Maria Novella* ☎ 055/2658082 🌐 [www.emiliopucci.com](http://www.emiliopucci.com).

## Emporio Armani

CLOTHING | The sister store of the Giorgio Armani boutique has slightly more

affordable nightclub- and office-friendly garb. ✉ *Via Roma 14/r, Santa Maria Novella* ☎ 055/284315 🌐 [www.armani.com](http://www.armani.com).

## Ferragamo

SHOES/LUGGAGE/LEATHER GOODS | This classy institution, in a 13th-century palazzo, displays designer clothing and accessories, though elegant footwear still underlies the Ferragamo success. ✉ *Via Tornabuoni 2/r, Santa Maria Novella* ☎ 055/292123 🌐 [www.ferragamo.com](http://www.ferragamo.com).

## Gatto Bianco

JEWELRY/ACCESSORIES | This contemporary jeweler has breathtakingly beautiful pieces worked in semiprecious and precious stones. ✉ *Borgo Santi Apostoli 12/r, Santa Maria Novella* ☎ 055/282989 🌐 [www.gattobiancogioielli.com](http://www.gattobiancogioielli.com).

## G.B. Frugone 1885

CLOTHING | If you're looking for elegant cashmere, look no further. This Genoese-based company has been making scarves, dresses, and sweaters (among other things) for men and women since 1885. ✉ *Via delle Belle Donne 35/r, Santa Maria Novella* ☎ 055/287820 🌐 [www.frugonecashmere.com](http://www.frugonecashmere.com).

## Giorgio Armani

CLOTHING | The sleek, classic boutique Giorgio Armani is a centerpiece of the dazzling high-end shops clustered in this part of town. ✉ *Via Tornabuoni 48/r, Santa Maria Novella* ☎ 055/219041 🌐 [www.armani.com](http://www.armani.com).

## Giotti

SHOES/LUGGAGE/LEATHER GOODS | You'll find a full line of leather goods, including clothing. ✉ *Piazza Ognissanti 3-4/r, Lungarno North* ☎ 055/294265 🌐 [www.bottegiotti.com/collection](http://www.bottegiotti.com/collection).

## Gucci

SHOES/LUGGAGE/LEATHER GOODS | Florentine perennial Gucci puts its famous initials on just about everything it sells. ✉ *Via Tornabuoni 73/r, Santa Maria Novella* ☎ 055/75923333 🌐 [www.gucci.com](http://www.gucci.com).

## ★ La Bottega dell'Olio

HOUSEHOLD ITEMS/FURNITURE | Experience olive oil in all its permutations at La Bottega dell'Olio. The shop, which is tucked into a small piazza, has a great collection of fine olive oils, as well as bath products made from olive oil. ✉ *Piazza del Limbo 2/r, Santa Maria Novella* ☎ 055/2670468 🌐 [www.labottegadelloliofirenze.it](http://www.labottegadelloliofirenze.it).

## Liberia Sacchi

BOOKS/STATIONERY | Genial proprietor and bibliophile Franco Ciocolini presides at this small shop specializing in old books, old prints, and the occasional contemporary painting. ✉ *Via Lambertesca 18/r, Santa Maria Novella* ☎ 055/290805.

## ★ Officina Profumo Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella

HOUSEHOLD ITEMS/FURNITURE | The essence of a Florentine holiday is captured in the sachets of this Art Nouveau emporium of herbal cosmetics and soaps that are made following centuries-old recipes created by friars. It celebrated its 400th birthday in 2012. ✉ *Via della Scala 16, Santa Maria Novella* ☎ 055/216276 🌐 [www.smnovella.it](http://www.smnovella.it).

## ★ Pineider

BOOKS/STATIONERY | Although it has shops throughout the world, Pineider started out in Florence in 1774 and still does all its printing here. Stationery and business cards are the mainstay, but the stores also sell fine leather desk accessories as well as a less stuffy, more lighthearted line of products. ✉ *Piazza Rucellai, Santa Maria Novella* ☎ 055/284656 🌐 [www.pineider.com](http://www.pineider.com).

## Prada

CLOTHING | Known to mix schoolmarmish sensibility with sexy cuts and funky fabrics, Prada appeals to an exclusive clientele. ✉ *Via Tornabuoni 67/r, Santa Maria Novella* ☎ 055/267471 🌐 [www.prada.com](http://www.prada.com).

## Principe

CLOTHING | This Florentine institution sells casual clothes for men, women, and children at far-from-casual prices. It also has a great housewares department. ✉ *Via del Sole 2, Santa Maria Novella* ☎ 055/292843 🌐 [www.principedifirenze.com](http://www.principedifirenze.com).

## **Tiffany**

**JEWELRY/ACCESSORIES** | One of Florence's oldest jewelers has supplied Italian (and other) royalty with finely crafted gems for centuries. Its selection of antique-looking classics has been updated with contemporary silver. ✉ *Via Tornabuoni 25/r, Santa Maria Novella* ☎ 055/215506 🌐 [www.tiffany.it](http://www.tiffany.it).

## **Valli**

**TEXTILES/SEWING** | Gifted seamstresses (and seamsters) should look no further than this place, which sells sumptuous silks, beaded fabrics, lace, wool, and tweeds by the meter. ✉ *Via della Vigna Nuova 81/r, Santa Maria Novella* ☎ 055/2302544 🌐 [www.vallitessuti.com](http://www.vallitessuti.com).



## Santa Croce

The Santa Croce quarter, on the southeast fringe of the historic center, was built up in the Middle Ages outside the second set of medieval city walls. The centerpiece of the neighborhood was (and is) the basilica of Santa Croce, which could hold great numbers of worshipers; the vast piazza could accommodate any overflow and also served as a fairground and, allegedly since the middle of the 16th century, as a playing field for no-holds-barred soccer games. A center of leather-working since the Middle Ages, the neighborhood is still packed with artisans and leather shops.

## S Sights

### American Military Cemetery

**CEMETERY** | About 8 km (5 miles) south of Florence on the road to Siena is one of two American cemeteries in Italy (the other is in Nettuno). It contains 4,399 bodies of Americans who died in Italy during World War II. Spread across a gently rolling hill, the simple crosses and Stars of David bearing only name, date of death, and state seem to stretch endlessly. At the top of the hill is a place for reflection and large mosaic maps depicting the Allied assault in 1943. The two fronts—called the Gothic Line and the Gustav Line—are vividly rendered. So, too, is the list containing 1,409 names of those missing in action. ✉ *From Florence, take Via Cassia south to Località Scopeti, Florence* ☎ 055/2020020 📧 *Free.*

### Casa Buonarroti

**MUSEUM** | If you really enjoy walking in the footsteps of the great genius, you may want to complete the picture by visiting the Buonarroti family home. Michelangelo lived here from 1516 to 1525, and later gave it to his nephew, whose son, called Michelangelo il Giovane (Michelangelo the Younger) turned it into a gallery dedicated to his great-uncle. The artist's descendants filled it with art treasures, some by Michelangelo himself. Two early marble works—the *Madonna of the Steps* and the *Battle of the Centaurs*—his genius.

✉ *Via Ghibellina 70, Santa Croce* ☎ 055/241752 🌐 [www.casabuonarroti.it](http://www.casabuonarroti.it)  
🗳️ €7 🕒 Closed Tues.

## Cimitero degli Inglesi

**CEMETERY** | Familiarly known as the English Cemetery, this is the final resting place for some 1,400 souls. It was designed in 1828 by Carlo Reishammer and originally intended for the Swiss community in Florence. Just outside Florence's 14th-century walls (no longer visible), the cemetery grew to accommodate other foreigners living here, and thus earned another of its names, the Protestant Cemetery. Perhaps its most famous resident is Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1809–61), who spent the last 15 years of her life in the city. Other expats, including Arthur Clough, Walter Savage Landor, Frances Trollope (mother of Anthony), and the American preacher Theodore Parker are buried in this cemetery, which is also referred to as the "Island of the Dead." (Swiss painter Arnold Böcklin [1827–1901] used the cemetery as inspiration for his haunting painting of that name.) ✉ *Piazzale Donatello 38, Santa Croce* ☎ 055/582608 🗳️ Free; suggested €3 per person for large groups 🕒 Closed weekends.

## Museo del Cenacolo

**MUSEUM** | This way-off-the-beaten-path museum (the name translates as the Museum of the Last Supper) has a stunning fresco by Andrea del Sarto. Begun sometime around 1511 and finished in 1526–27, the fresco depicts the moment when Christ announced that one of his apostles would betray him. Andrea has rendered the scene in subtle yet still brilliant colors. Also on display are a couple of lesser-known works by Pontorno and copies of other 16th-century works. Down the street is the church of San Salvi, founded by John Gualbert and begun in 1048. Though it suffered damage during the siege of 1529–30, the interior has a modest but lovely *Madonna and Child* by Lorenzo di Bicci as well as a 16th-century wood cross on the altar. To get here, take Bus 6 from Piazza San Marco and get off at the Lungo L'Affrico stop—it's the first stop after crossing the railroad tracks. ✉ *Via San Salvi 16, Florence* ☎ 055/2388603 🗳️ Free 🕒 Closed Mon.

## Museo Horne

**BUILDING** | Englishman Herbert P. Horne (1864–1916), architect, art

historian, and collector, spent much of his life in his 15th-century palazzo surrounded by carefully culled paintings, sculptures, and other decorative arts mostly from the 14th to 16th century. His home has since been turned into a museum, and the jewel of the collection is Giotto's *St. Stephen*. The rest of the collection is decidedly B-list (he owned plenty of minor works by major artists such as Masaccio and Bernini), but it's still worth a visit to see how a gentleman lived in the 19th century. Many of the furnishings, such as the 15th-century *lettuccio* (divan), are exemplary. ✉ *Via dei Benci 6, Santa Croce* 📞 055/244661 🌐 [www.museohorne.it](http://www.museohorne.it) 🎫 €7 🕒 Closed Wed.

### **Piazza dei Ciompi**

**PLAZA** | Once the site of a daily flea market, this piazza was a working-class neighborhood of primarily wool- and silk-trade workers in the 14th century. The disenfranchised wool workers, forbidden entry to the *Arte della Lana* (the Wool Guild, whose members included those who traded in wool), briefly seized control of the government. It was a short-lived exercise in rule by the non-represented and was eventually overpowered by the ruling upper class. The loggia, executed in 1567, is by Giorgio Vasari. ✉ *Florence*.

### **Piazza Santa Croce**

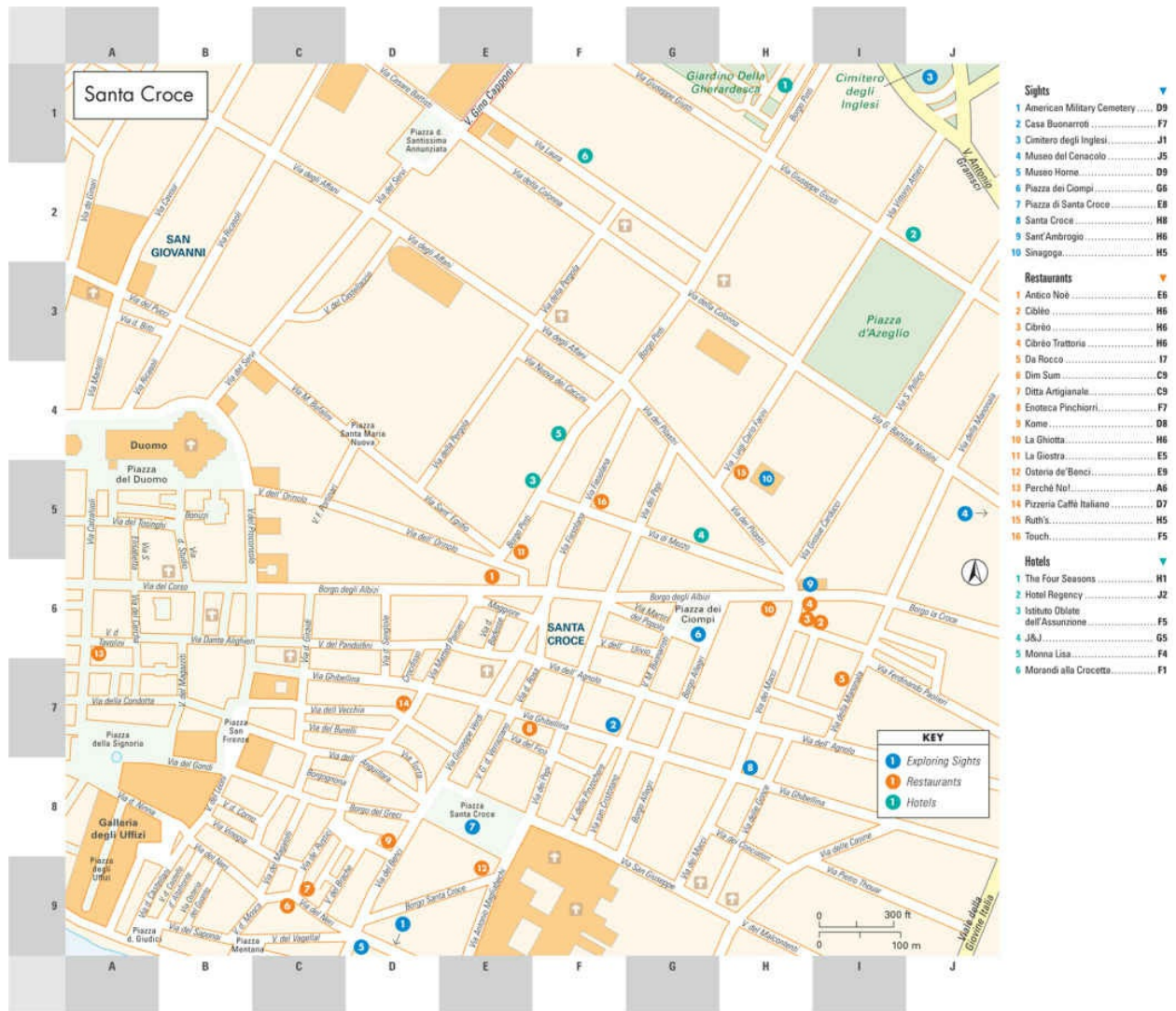
**PLAZA** | Originally outside the city's 12th-century walls, this piazza grew with the Franciscans, who used the large square for public preaching. During the Renaissance it was used for *giostre* (jousts), including one sponsored by Lorenzo de' Medici. Lined with many palazzi dating from the 15th and 16th centuries, the square remains one of Florence's loveliest piazze and is a great place to people-watch. ✉ *Florence*.

### **★ Santa Croce**

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | Like the Duomo, this church is Gothic, but, also like the Duomo, its facade dates from the 19th century. As a burial place, the church probably contains more skeletons of Renaissance celebrities than any other in Italy. The tomb of Michelangelo is on the right at the front of the basilica; he is said to have chosen this spot so that the first thing he would see on Judgment Day, when the graves of the dead fly open, would be Brunelleschi's dome through Santa Croce's open doors. The tomb of Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) is on the left wall; he was not granted a Christian burial

until 100 years after his death because of his controversial contention that Earth was not the center of the universe. The tomb of Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527), the political theoretician whose brutally pragmatic philosophy so influenced the Medici, is halfway down the nave on the right. The grave of Lorenzo Ghiberti, creator of the Baptistery doors, is halfway down the nave on the left. Composer Gioacchino Rossini (1792–1868) is buried at the end of the nave on the right. The monument to Dante Alighieri (1265–1321), the greatest Italian poet, is a memorial rather than a tomb (he is buried in Ravenna); it's on the right wall near the tomb of Michelangelo.

The collection of art within the complex is by far the most important of any church in Florence. The most famous works are probably the Giotto frescoes in the two chapels immediately to the right of the high altar. They illustrate scenes from the lives of St. John the Evangelist and St. John the Baptist (in the right-hand chapel) and scenes from the life of St. Francis (in the left-hand chapel). Time has not been kind to these frescoes; through the centuries, wall tombs were placed in the middle of them, they were whitewashed and plastered over, and in the 19th century they suffered a clumsy restoration. But the reality that Giotto introduced into painting can still be seen. He did not paint beautifully stylized religious icons, as the Byzantine style that preceded him prescribed; he instead painted drama—St. Francis surrounded by grieving friars at the very moment of his death. This was a radical shift in emphasis: before Giotto, painting's role was to symbolize the attributes of God; after him, it was to imitate life. His work is indeed primitive compared with later painting, but in the early 14th century it caused a sensation that was not equaled for another 100 years. He was, for his time, the equal of both Masaccio and Michelangelo.



Among the church's other highlights are Donatello's *Annunciation*, a moving expression of surprise (on the right wall two-thirds of the way down the nave); 14th-century frescoes by Taddeo Gaddi (circa 1300–66) illustrating scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary, clearly showing the influence of Giotto (in the chapel at the end of the right transept); and Donatello's *Crucifix*, criticized by Brunelleschi for making Christ look like a peasant (in the chapel at the end of the left transept). Outside the church proper, in the **Museo dell'Opera di Santa Croce** off the cloister, is the 13th-century *Triumphal Cross* by Cimabue (circa 1240–1302), badly damaged by the flood of 1966. A model of architectural geometry, the Cappella Pazzi, at the end of the cloister, is the work of Brunelleschi. ✉ Piazza Santa Croce 16, Florence ☎ 055/2466105 🌐 [www.santacroceopera.it](http://www.santacroceopera.it) 📮 Church and museum €8 🕒

*Closed Sun. morning.*

### **Sant' Ambrogio**

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | Named for the Bishop of Milan, this 10th-century church once belonged to an order of Benedictine nuns. Just this side of austere, the church is one of the oldest in Florence. Though its facade is 19th century, inside are 15th-century panel paintings and a lovely but rather damaged 1486 fresco by Cosimo Roselli, in the chapel to the left of the high altar. The tabernacle of the Blessed Sacrament was carved by Mino da Fiesole, who, like Verrocchio, il Cronaca, and Francesco Granacci (1469/77–1543), is buried here. ✉ *Piazza Sant' Ambrogio, Santa Croce* 🏠 *Free.*

### **Sinagoga**

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | Jews were well settled in Florence by the end of the 14th century, but by 1574 they were required to live within the large “ghetto,” at the north side of today’s Piazza della Repubblica, by decree of Cosimo I.

Construction of the modern Moorish-style synagogue began in 1874 as a bequest of David Levi, who wished to endow a synagogue “worthy of the city.” Falcini, Micheli, and Treves designed the building on a domed Greek cross plan with galleries in the transept and a roofline bearing three distinctive copper cupolas visible from all over Florence. The exterior has alternating bands of tan travertine and pink granite, reflecting an Islamic style repeated in Giovanni Panti’s ornate interior. Of particular interest are the cast-iron gates by Pasquale Franci, the eternal light by Francesco Morini, and the Murano glass mosaics by Giacomo dal Medico. The gilded doors of the Moorish ark, which fronts the pulpit and is flanked by extravagant candelabra, are decorated with symbols of the ancient Temple of Jerusalem and bear bayonet marks from vandals. The synagogue was used as a garage by the Nazis, who failed to inflict much damage in spite of an attempt to blow up the place with dynamite. Only the columns on the left side were destroyed, and even then, the Women’s Balcony above did not collapse. Note the Star of David in black and yellow marble inlay on the floor. The original capitals can be seen in the garden. ✉ *Via Farini 4, Santa Croce* 📞 *055/2346654* 🌐 [www.coopculture.it](http://www.coopculture.it) 🏠 *Synagogue and museum €7* 🕒 *Closed Sat. and Jewish holidays.*

## r Restaurants

### Antico Noe

\$\$ | TUSCAN | The short menu at the one-room eatery relies heavily on seasonal ingredients picked up daily at the market. Although the secondi are good, the antipasti and primi really shine. **Known for:** attention to seasonal vegetables; artichoke dishes; porcini dishes. (\$) *Average main: €15* ✉ *Volta di San Piero 6/r, Santa Croce* ☎ 055/2340838 🕒 *Closed Sun., and 2 wks in Aug.*

### ★ Ciblèò

\$\$\$\$ | FUSION | This tiny eatery, which seats just about 20 people, brilliantly blends the cuisine of Tuscany with that of Korea and Japan. Here you'll find wacky and marvelous combinations in their dumplings, ravioli, and more on a seasonally changing menu. **Known for:** startling flavor combinations; a collection of sakes; one seating per evening at 7 pm. (\$) *Average main: €50* ✉ *via del Verrocchio 2/r, Florence* ☎ 055/2341100 🌐 [www.cibreo.com](http://www.cibreo.com) 🕒 *Closed Sun. and Mon. No lunch.*

### ★ Cibrèò

\$\$\$\$ | TUSCAN | This upscale trattoria serves sumptuous options like the creamy crostini di fegatini (a savory chicken-liver spread) and melt-in-your-mouth desserts. Many Florentines hail this as the city's best restaurant, and justifiably so: chef-owner Fabio Picchi knows Tuscan food better than anyone, and though there's not a pasta dish to be seen on the menu (he argues that Florence doesn't really have any native pasta dishes), his deep understanding of Tuscan food shines through. **Known for:** authentic Tuscan food; no written menu; multilingual staff. (\$) *Average main: €40* ✉ *Via A. del Verrocchio 8/r, Santa Croce* ☎ 055/2341100.

### Cibrèò Trattoria

\$\$ | TUSCAN | This intimate little trattoria, known to locals as Cibreino, shares its kitchen with the famed Florentine culinary institution from which it gets its name. It's the same kitchen, shorter menu, and is not nearly as expensive. **Known for:** excellent meal at a moderate price; clever riffs on classic dishes; go early to avoid a wait. (\$) *Average main: €15* ✉ *Via dei Macci 118, Santa*

Croce ☎ 055/2341100 🚫 No credit cards 🕒 Closed Sun. and Mon., and July 25–Sept. 5.

### da Rocco

\$ | TUSCAN | At one of Florence's biggest markets you can grab lunch to go, or you could cram yourself into one of the booths and pour from the straw-cloaked flask (wine here is *da consumo*, which means they charge you for how much you drink). Food is abundant, Tuscan, and fast; locals pack in. **Known for:** tasty food at rock-bottom prices; ever-changing menu; take-out.

💰 Average main: €7 ✉ Mercato Sant'Ambrogio, Piazza Ghiberti, Santa Croce 🚫 No credit cards 🕒 Closed Sun. No dinner.

### Dim Sum

\$ | ASIAN FUSION | Florence has long been in dire need of a top-notch Asian restaurant, and now it finally has one. You can watch as classic dumplings and Tuscan variations (beef with *lardo di colonnata* or truffled beef) are made. **Known for:** open kitchen lets you see the food being prepared; classic and fusion dishes; rolls and noodle dishes. 💰 Average main: €13 ✉ Via, Dei Neri, Santa Croce ☎ 055/284331 🌐 [www.dimsumrestaurant.it](http://www.dimsumrestaurant.it)

### Ditta Artigianale

\$ | ITALIAN | This place is always crowded with mostly young folk lingering over non-Italian cups of coffee. Light lunch and brunch are also on offer, and in between there's a steady supply of cakes, cookies, and croissants. **Known for:** non-Italian coffee; tasty food; long opening hours. 💰 Average main: €9 ✉ Via de'Neri 32, Santa Croce ☎ 055/2741541 🌐 [www.dittaartigianale.it](http://www.dittaartigianale.it) 🚫 No credit cards.

### Enoteca Pinchiorri

\$\$\$\$ | ITALIAN | A sumptuous Renaissance palace with high frescoed ceilings and bouquets in silver vases provides the backdrop for this restaurant, one of the most expensive in Italy. Some consider it one of the best, and others consider it inauthentic as the cuisine extends far beyond Italian. **Known for:** creative food; wine cellar; exorbitantly high prices. 💰 Average main: €100 ✉ Via Ghibellina 87, Santa Croce ☎ 055/242777 🌐 [www.enotecapinchiorri.it](http://www.enotecapinchiorri.it) 🕒 Closed Sun., Mon., and Aug. No lunch 🧥 Jacket required.



## Kome

\$\$ | JAPANESE | If you're looking for a break from the ubiquitous ribollita, stop in at this eatery, which may be the only Japanese restaurant in the world to be housed in a 15th-century Renaissance palazzo. High, vaulted arches frame the Kaiten sushi conveyor belt. **Known for:** creative sushi; Japanese barbecue prepared table-side; ramen noodles. (\$) *Average main: €16* ✉ *Via de' Benci 41/r, Santa Croce* ☎ 055/2008009 🌐 [www.komefirenze.it](http://www.komefirenze.it).

## La Ghiotta

\$ | FAST FOOD | This shop sells whole and half chickens, grilled or roasted, among other things. You can assemble a perfect dinner, from soup to nuts, at this Florentine favorite. **Known for:** local favorite; chicken prepared various ways. (\$) *Average main: €8* ✉ *Via Pietrapiana 7/r, Santa Croce* ☎ 055/241237 🚫 *No credit cards* 🕒 *No dinner Mon.*

## ★ La Giostra

\$\$\$ | ITALIAN | This clubby spot, whose name means “carousel” in Italian, was created by the late Prince Dimitri Kunz d'Asburgo Lorena, and is now expertly run by Soldano and Dimitri, his friendly twin sons. The ever-changing menu almost always has vegetarian and vegan options. **Known for:** sublime tiramisu and a wonderfully gooey Sacher torte; carefully curated wine list; vegetarian and vegan options. (\$) *Average main: €30* ✉ *Borgo Pinti 12/r, Santa Croce* ☎ 055/241341 🌐 [www.ristorantelagiostra.com](http://www.ristorantelagiostra.com) 🕒 *No lunch weekends.*

## ★ Osteria de'Benci

\$\$ | ITALIAN | A few minutes from Santa Croce, this charming osteria serves some of the most eclectic food in Florence. Try the spaghetti *degli eretici* (in tomato sauce with fresh herbs). **Known for:** weekly seasonal specials; eclectic menu; Tuscan-heavy wine list. (\$) *Average main: €15* ✉ *Borgo Santa Croce 31/r, Santa Croce* ☎ 055/2344923.

## ★ Perché No!

\$ | CAFÉ | They've been making ice cream at this much-loved-by-Florentines place since 1939. Such continuity is the reason why this might be the best gelateria in the historic center. **Known for:** gelati made daily; one of the oldest gelaterias in the city; unusual flavors and vegan options. (\$) *Average*

main: €3 ✉ Santa Croce ☎ 055/2398969 🌐 [www.percheno.firenze.it](http://www.percheno.firenze.it) 🚫 No credit cards.

### Pizzeria Caffè Italiano

\$ | PIZZA | This small pizzeria is favored by locals. Come early to grab one of the few tables in front or round the back, and don't mind the fact that service here is intentionally rushed: turning tables is paramount. **Known for:** limited seating; local favorite. 💰 Average main: €10 ✉ Via Isole delle Stinche 11/r, Santa Croce ☎ 055/289368 🚫 No credit cards.

### Ruth's

\$ | TUSCAN | The only kosher-vegetarian restaurant in Tuscany is Ruth's, adjacent to Florence's synagogue. On the menu: inexpensive vegetarian and Mediterranean dishes and a large selection of kosher wines. **Known for:** harissa; nice wine list; friendly staff. 💰 Average main: €14 ✉ Via Farini 2/a, Santa Croce ☎ 055/2480888 🌐 [www.kosheruth.com](http://www.kosheruth.com) 🚫 No credit cards.

### Touch

\$\$ | MODERN ITALIAN | The first restaurant in Florence with the menu written on an iPad (hence the name), owners Stefano, Matteo, and Max met at hospitality school, and their imaginative food plays with the classics in a marvelous way. The classic bollito is redone with meats combined, encased with a raviolo covering, and graced with an egg sauce. **Known for:** menu changes often; good wine list; ebullient hosts. 💰 Average main: €20 ✉ Via Fiesolana 18/r, Santa Croce ☎ 055/2466150 🌐 [www.touchflorence.com](http://www.touchflorence.com) 🕒 No lunch.

## What Tripe! I

While in Florence, those with a sense of culinary adventure should seek out a tripe sandwich, which is just about as revered by local gourmands as the *bistecca alla fiorentina*. In this case, however, the treasure comes on the cheap—sandwiches are sold from small stands found in the city center, topped with a fragrant green sauce or a piquant red hot sauce, or both. *Bagnato* means that the hard, crusty roll is first dipped in the tripe's cooking liquid; it's advisable to say "sì"

when asked if that's how you like it. Sandwiches are usually taken with a glass of red wine poured from the tripe seller's *fiasco* (flask). If you find the tripe to your liking, you might also enjoy *lampredotto*, another (some say better) cut of stomach. For an exalted, high-end tripe treat, try Fabio Picchi's cold tripe salad, served gratis as an *amuse-bouche* at the restaurant Cibrè.

Tripe carts are lunchtime favorites of Florentine working men—it's uncommon, but not unheard of, to see a woman at a tripe stand. Aficionados will argue which sandwich purveyor is best; here are three that frequently get mentioned:

**Il Trippaio.** ☒ *Via de' Macci at Borgo La Croce, Santa Croce* ☒ *No credit cards* ☹ *Closed Sun.*

**La Trippaia.** ☒ *Via dell'Ariento, Santa Maria Novella* ☒ *No credit cards* ☹ *Closed Sun.*

**Nerbone.** ☒ *Inside the Mercato Centrale, Santa Maria Novella* ☒ *No credit cards* ☹ *Closed Sun.*

## h Hotels

### The Four Seasons

\$\$\$\$ | HOTEL | This 15th-century palazzo in Florence's center is perhaps the most luxurious show in town; many guestrooms have original 17th-century frescoes, while some face the garden and others face quiet interior courtyards. **Pros:** pool and state of the art spa; 11-acre garden; a Michelin-starred restaurant. **Cons:** breakfast not included; splashing children in the pool can be a nuisance for some; small rooms. 💰 *Rooms from: €850* ☒ *Borgo Pinti 99e, Santa Croce* ☎ *055/26261* 🌐 [www.fourseasons.com/florence](http://www.fourseasons.com/florence) 📍 *117 rooms* ☹ *No meals.*

### Hotel Regency

\$\$\$ | HOTEL | Rooms dressed in richly colored fabrics and antique-style furniture remain faithful to the premises' 19th-century origins as a private mansion; meanwhile, the noise and crowds of Florence seem far from this stylish retreat in a residential district near the Sinagoga, though you're not more than 10 minutes from the Accademia and Michelangelo's *David*. Across the street is Piazza d'Azeglio, a small public park that somehow evokes 19th-century middle Europe. **Pros:** faces one of the few green parks in the center of Florence; quiet neighborhood; the lovely restaurant *il Relais*

le Jardin on-site. **Cons:** somewhat removed from the city center; rooms facing the park can be noisy. [D] *Rooms from: €283* ✉ *Piazza d'Azeglio 3, Santa Croce* ☎ *055/245247* 🌐 [www.regency-hotel.com](http://www.regency-hotel.com) ↗ *32 rooms* 🏠 | *Free breakfast.*

### Istituto Oblate dell'Assunzione

\$ | **B&B/INN** | Seven nuns run this convent, minutes from the Duomo, with spotlessly clean, simple rooms; some have views of the cupola, and others look out onto a carefully tended garden where you are welcome to relax. **Pros:** great location and (mostly) quiet rooms; Mass held daily; a soothing, somewhat untended garden. **Cons:** 11:30 pm curfew; rooms facing the street can be noisy. [D] *Rooms from: €40* ✉ *Borgo Pinti 15, Santa Croce* ☎ *055/2480582* 🌐 [www.monasterystays.com](http://www.monasterystays.com) 🚫 *No credit cards* ↗ *28 rooms* 🏠 | *Free breakfast.*

### J&J

\$\$ | **B&B/INN** | On a quiet street within walking distance of the sights sits this unusual hotel, a converted 16th-century convent, with large, suitelike rooms ideal for honeymooners, families, and small groups of friends; some are on two levels, and many are arranged around a central courtyard. **Pros:** large rooms, some with views; feels residential, even though you're in the historic center; in a great neighborhood. **Cons:** one flight of steep stairs to get to rooms; staff could be nicer; no elevator. [D] *Rooms from: €183* ✉ *Via di Mezzo 20, Santa Croce* ☎ *055/26312* 🌐 [www.jandjhotel.net](http://www.jandjhotel.net) ↗ *19 rooms, 7 suites* 🏠 | *Free breakfast.*

### ★ Monna Lisa

\$\$ | **HOTEL** | Although some rooms are small, they are tastefully decorated, and best of all, housed in a 15th-century palazzo that retains some of its wood-coffered ceilings from the 1500s, as well as its original staircase. **Pros:** lavish buffet breakfast; cheerful multilingual staff; garden. **Cons:** rooms in annex are less charming than those in palazzo; street noise in some rooms; thin walls have been noted. [D] *Rooms from: €184* ✉ *Borgo Pinti 27, Santa Croce* ☎ *055/2479751* 🌐 [www.monnalisa.it](http://www.monnalisa.it) ↗ *45 rooms* 🏠 | *Free breakfast.*

### ★ Morandi alla Crocetta

\$\$ | **B&B/INN** | You're made to feel like friends of the family at this charming

and distinguished residence, furnished comfortably in the classic style of a gracious Florentine home and former convent. **Pros:** interesting, offbeat location near the sights; book in advance as space is limited; historic touches like 17th-century fresco fragments. **Cons:** two flights of stairs to reach reception and rooms; far from the “true” historical center; mediocre breakfast. ☎ *Rooms from: €148* ✉ *Via Laura 50, Santissima Annunziata* 📞 *055/2344747* 🌐 [www.hotelmorandi.it](http://www.hotelmorandi.it) ➡ *10 rooms* 🍷 | *Free breakfast.*

## n Nightlife

### Jazz Club

**DANCE CLUBS** | Enjoy live music in this small basement club. ✉ *Via Nuova de' Caccini 3, at Borgo Pinti, Santa Croce.*

### Rex

**BARS/PUBS** | A trendy, artsy clientele frequents this bar at aperitivo time; around 10 pm, the place is packed with mostly young folks sipping artfully made cocktails. ✉ *Via Fiesolana 23–25/r, Santa Croce* 📞 *055/2480331* 🌐 [www.rexfirenze.com](http://www.rexfirenze.com).

### Sant’Ambrogio Caffè

**BARS/PUBS** | Come here in the summer for outdoor seating with a view of an 11th-century church (Sant’Ambrogio) directly across the street. Come here when it’s not for perfectly mixed drinks and a lively atmosphere filled with (mostly) locals. ✉ *Piazza Sant’Ambrogio 7–8/r, Santa Croce* 📞 *055/2477277.*

## p Performing Arts

### Amici della Musica

**MUSIC** | This organization sponsors classical and contemporary concerts at the Teatro della Pergola (*Box office, Via Alamanni 39, Lungarno North* 📞 *055/210804* 🌐 [www.teatrodellapergola.com](http://www.teatrodellapergola.com)). ✉ *Via Pier Capponi 41,*

Florence 🌐 [www.amicimusica.fi.it](http://www.amicimusica.fi.it).

### **Festival dei Popoli**

FILM | This weeklong documentary film festival happens in November or December with screenings at various venues around town. ✉ *Borgo Pinti 82/r, Santa Croce* ☎ 055/244778 🌐 [www.festivaldeipopoli.org](http://www.festivaldeipopoli.org).

### **Orchestra della Toscana**

MUSIC | The concert season of the Orchestra della Toscana runs from November to June. ✉ *Via Ghibellina 101, Santa Croce* ☎ 055/2342722 🌐 [www.orchestradellatoscana.it](http://www.orchestradellatoscana.it).

### **Teatro della Pergola**

THEATER | From mid-October to mid-April see Italian plays at this 1656 theater built by Ferdinando Tacca, once the private theater of the grand dukes. The theater has undergone several metamorphoses; its present incarnation dates to 1828, and the atrium was constructed nine years later. ✉ *Via della Pergola 12/r, Santissima Annunziata* ☎ 055/22641 🌐 [www.teatrodellapergola.com](http://www.teatrodellapergola.com).

## **b Shopping**

### **AquaFlor Firenze**

PERFUME/COSMETICS | Candles, soaps, and other heavenly products for the body and house may be found in this shop, which is set in a Renaissance palace. ✉ *Borgo Santa Croce 6, Santa Croce* ☎ 055/2343471 🌐 [www.aquaflor.it](http://www.aquaflor.it).

### **Libreria Salimbeni**

BOOKS/STATIONERY | One of Florence's best art-book shops has an outstanding selection. ✉ *Via Matteo Palmieri 14-16/r, Santa Croce* ☎ 055/2340905 🌐 [www.librieriasalimbeni.com](http://www.librieriasalimbeni.com) ☹ Closed Sun.

### **Mercato di Sant'Ambrogio**

OUTDOOR/FLEA/GREEN MARKETS | It's possible to strike gold at this lively

market, where clothing stalls about the fruits and vegetables. ✉ *Piazza Ghiberti, off Via dei Macci, Santa Croce.*

### **Oreria**

**JEWELRY/ACCESSORIES** | The two women who run Oreria create divine designs using silver and semiprecious stones. Send suitors to purchase significant gifts here. ✉ *Borgo Pinti 87/a, Santa Croce* ☎ *055/244708* 🌐 [www.oreria.net](http://www.oreria.net).

### **Paolo Carandini**

**SHOES/LUGGAGE/LEATHER GOODS** | Stop in here for exquisite leather objects such as picture frames, jewelry boxes, and desk accessories. ✉ *Borgo Allegri 7/r, Santa Croce* ☎ *055/245397*.

### **Sbigoli Terrecotte**

**HOUSEHOLD ITEMS/FURNITURE** | Traditional Tuscan terracotta and ceramic vases, pots, and cups and saucers are on offer at this shop in the Santa Croce neighborhood. ✉ *Via Sant'Egidio 4/r, Santa Croce* ☎ *055/2479713* 🌐 [www.sbigoliterrecotte.it](http://www.sbigoliterrecotte.it).

### ★ **Scuola del Cuoio**

**SHOES/LUGGAGE/LEATHER GOODS** | A consortium of leatherworkers ply their trade at Scuola del Cuoio (Leather School), in the former dormitory of the convent of Santa Croce; high-quality, fairly priced jackets, belts, and purses are sold here. ✉ *Piazza Santa Croce 16, Florence* ☎ *055/244533* 🌐 [www.scuoladelcuoio.com](http://www.scuoladelcuoio.com).

## The Oltrarno

A walk through the Oltrarno (literally “the other side of the Arno”) takes in two very different aspects of Florence: the splendor of the Medici, manifest in the riches of the mammoth Palazzo Pitti and the gracious Giardino di Boboli; and the charm of the Oltrarno, a slightly gentrified but still fiercely proud working-class neighborhood with artisans’ and antiques shops.

Farther east across the Arno, a series of ramps and stairs climb to Piazzale Michelangelo, where the city lies before you in all its glory (save this trip for a clear day). More stairs (behind La Loggia restaurant) lead to the church of San Miniato al Monte. You can avoid the long walk by taking Bus 12 or 13 at the west end of Ponte alle Grazie and getting off at Piazzale Michelangelo; you still have to climb the monumental stairs to and from San Miniato, but you can then take the bus from Piazzale Michelangelo back to the center of town. If you decide to take a bus, remember to buy your ticket before you board.

## S Sights

### **Certosa**

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | The incredible Carthusian complex was largely funded in 1342 by the wealthy Florentine banker Niccolò Acciaiuoli, whose guilt at having amassed so much money must have been at least temporarily assuaged with the creation of such a structure to honor God. In the grand cloister are stunning (but faded) frescoes of *Christ’s Passion* by Pontormo. Though much of the paint is missing, their power is still unmistakable. Also of great interest are the monks’ cells; the monks could spend most of their lives tending their own private gardens without dealing with any other monks. To get here, you must either take Bus 37 and get off at the stop marked “Certosa” or have a car. Tours, which are mandatory, are given only in Italian, but even if you can’t understand what’s being said, you can still take in the sights. ✉ *From Florence, take Viale Petrarca to Via Senese and follow it for about 10 mins; the Certosa is on the right, Via di Colleramole*



11, Galluzzo, Florence ☎ 055/2049226 🌐 [www.cistercensi.info](http://www.cistercensi.info) 📧 Suggested from €3 🕒 Closed Sun. and Mon.

### ★ **Giardino Bardini**

**GARDEN** | Garden lovers, those who crave a view, and those who enjoy a nice hike should visit this lovely villa and garden, whose history spans centuries. The villa had a walled garden as early as the 14th century; the “Grand Stairs”—a zigzag ascent well worth scaling—have been around since the 16th. The garden is filled with irises, roses, and heirloom flowers, and includes a Japanese garden and statuary. A very pretty walk (all for the same admission ticket) takes you through the Giardino di Boboli and past the Forte Belvedere to the upper entrance to the giardino. ✉ *Via de’Bardini, San Niccolò* ☎ 055/294883 🎫 €10 combined ticket, includes Giardino di Boboli, Museo delle Porcellane 🕒 Closed 1st and last Mon. of month.

### **Giardino di Boboli** (Boboli Gardens)

**GARDEN** | The main entrance to these landscaped gardens is from the right side of the courtyard of **Palazzo Pitti**. The gardens began to take shape in 1549, when the Pitti family sold the palazzo to Eleanor of Toledo, wife of the Medici grand duke Cosimo I. Niccolò Tribolo (1500–50) laid out the first landscaping plans, and after his death, Ammannati, Giambologna, Bernardo Buontalenti (circa 1536–1608), Giulio (1571–1635), and Alfonso Parigi (1606–56), among others, continued his work. Italian landscaping is less formal than French, but still full of sweeping drama. A copy of the famous *Morgante*, Cosimo I’s favorite dwarf astride a particularly unhappy tortoise, is near the exit. Sculpted by Valerio Cioli (circa 1529–99), the work seems to illustrate the perils of culinary overindulgence. A visit here can be disappointing, because the gardens are somewhat sparse, but the pleasant walk offers excellent views. ✉ *Enter through Palazzo Pitti, Florence* ☎ 055/294883 🌐 [www.polomuseale.firenze.it](http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it) 🎫 €10 combined ticket, Museo delle Porcellane, and Giardino Bardini 🕒 Closed 1st and last Mon. of month.

### **Museo Bardini**

**MUSEUM** | The 19th-century collector and antiquarian Stefano Bardini turned his palace into his own private museum. Upon his death, the collection was turned over to the state and includes an interesting assortment of Etruscan pieces, sculpture, paintings, and furniture that dates mostly from the

Renaissance and the Baroque. ✉ *Piazza de' Mozzi 1, Florence* 📞 055/2342427 🌐 [museiciviciorentini.comune.fi.it](http://museiciviciorentini.comune.fi.it) 🎫 €6 🕒 Closed Tues. and Wed.

## A Good Walk: Florentine Piazzas S

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You may come to Florence for the art, but once here you're likely to be won over by the pedestrian-friendly street life played out on its wonderfully varied piazzas. This walk takes you through many of them (but bypasses some of the most prominent ones you'll inevitably encounter while sightseeing).

Start off in **Piazza Santa Maria Novella**, by the train station; note the glorious facade by Leon Battista Alberti decorating the square's church. Take Via delle Belle Donne, a narrow street running southeast from the piazza, and go left heading toward Via del Trebbio. Here you'll see a cross marking the site of a 13th-century street scuffle between Dominican friars and Patarene heretics. (The Dominicans won.) A right on Via Tornabuoni takes you to tiny **Piazza Antinori**; the 15th-century Antinori palace has been in the hands of its wine-producing namesake family for generations.

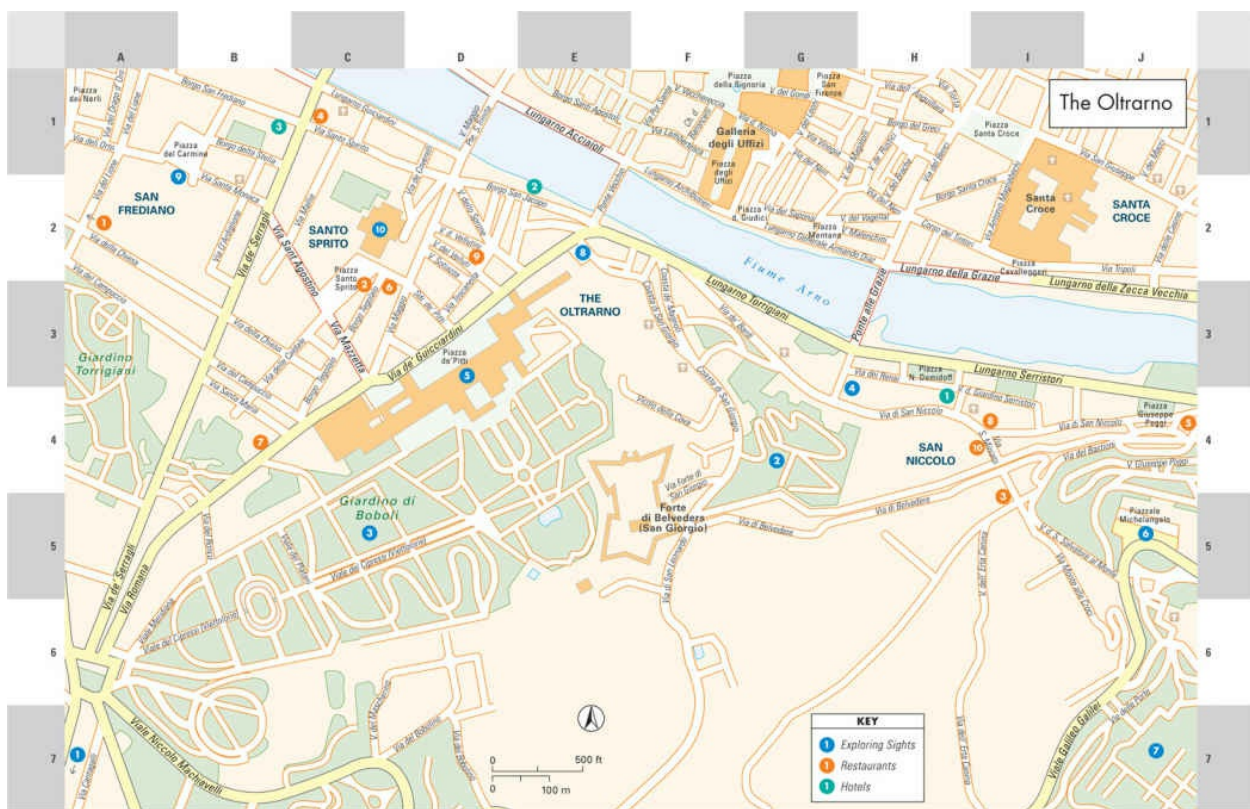
Continue south on Via Tornabuoni, stopping in **Piazza Strozzi** to admire the gargantuan Palazzo Strozzi, a 16th-century family palace designed specifically to dwarf the Palazzo Medici, and step into the delicate courtyard. Next stop on Via Tornabuoni is the lovely little **Piazza Santa Trinita**. Take a quick look into the church of Santa Trinita; in its Sassetti Chapel in the right transept, Ghirlandaio's 15th-century frescoes depict the square in which you were just standing.

Continue south to the Arno and cross it via the Ponte Trinita. Go south on Via Maggio, then make a right on Via Michelozzi, which leads to **Piazza Santo Spirito**, one of the liveliest squares in Florence. Walking away from the piazza's church (heading south), make a left on Via Sant'Agostino, which turns into Via Mazzetta. Stop in **Piazza San Felice** and note No. 8, home of English poets Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Robert Browning from 1849 to 1861.

Via Guicciardini takes you to **Piazza dei Pitti**, which was intended to outsize Palazzo Strozzi, and it succeeds. Behind the palazzo is the Giardino di Boboli. Walking to its top, you'll pass man-made lakes, waterfalls, and grottoes. Head for the 18th-century Giardino dei Cavalieri; when you arrive, pause and admire the view. It's hard to believe the scene in front of you, complete with

olive groves, is in the city center.

Head back toward the Arno along Via Guicciardini. Just before the Ponte Vecchio, turn right onto Via de' Bardi. Stop in **Piazza Maria Sopr'Arno** and check out the eerie 20th-century sculpture of John the Baptist, patron saint of Florence. Continue along Via de' Bardi until it becomes Via San Niccolò. Make a right on Via San Miniato, passing through the city walls at Porta San Niccolò. Head up, steeply, on Via Monte alle Croci, and veer left, taking the steps of Via di San Salvatore al Monte. At the top is **Piazzale Michelangelo**, where your effort is rewarded with a breathtaking view of Florence below.



Sights	Restaurants	Hotels
1 Certosa ..... A7	1 Alla Vecchia Bettola ..... A2	1 Hotel Silla ..... H4
2 Giardino Bardini ..... G4	2 Borgo Antico ..... C3	2 Lungarno ..... E2
3 Giardino di Boboli ..... C5	3 Fuori Porta ..... I5	3 Palazzo Magnani Ferroni ..... B1
4 Museo Bardini ..... G4	4 Il Santo Bevitore ..... C1	
5 Palazzo Pitti ..... D3	5 La Bottega del Buon Caffè ..... J4	
6 Piazzale Michelangelo ..... J5	6 La Casalinga ..... C3	
7 San Miniato al Monte ..... J7	7 L'Osteria dell'Enoteca ..... B4	
8 Santa Felicità ..... E2	8 Osteria Antica Mescita San Niccolò ..... I4	
9 Santa Maria del Carmine ..... B2	9 Quattro Leoni ..... D2	
10 Santo Spirito ..... C2	10 Zeb ..... I4	

## Palazzo Pitti

**CASTLE/PALACE** | This enormous palace is one of Florence's largest architectural set pieces. The original palazzo, built for the Pitti family around 1460, comprised only the main entrance and the three windows on either side. In 1549 the property was sold to the Medici, and Bartolomeo

Ammannati was called in to make substantial additions. Although he apparently operated on the principle that more is better, he succeeded only in producing proof that more is just that: more.

Today the palace houses several museums: The **Museo degli Argenti** displays a vast collection of Medici treasures, including exquisite antique vases belonging to Lorenzo the Magnificent. The **Galleria del Costume** showcases fashions from the past 300 years. The **Galleria d'Arte Moderna** holds a collection of 19th- and 20th-century paintings, mostly Tuscan. Most famous of the Pitti galleries is the **Galleria Palatina**, which contains a broad collection of paintings from the 15th to 17th century. The rooms of the Galleria Palatina remain much as the Lorena, the rulers who took over after the last Medici died in 1737, left them. Their floor-to-ceiling paintings are considered by some to be Italy's most egregious exercise in conspicuous consumption, aesthetic overkill, and trumpery. Still, the collection possesses high points, including a number of portraits by Titian and an unparalleled collection of paintings by Raphael. The price of admission to the Galleria Palatina also allows you to explore the former **Appartamenti Reali**, containing furnishings from a remodeling done in the 19th century. ✉ *Piazza Pitti, Florence* ☎ 055/294883 🌐 [www.polomuseale.firenze.it](http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it) 📧 From €16 🕒 Closed Mon.

### **Piazzale Michelangelo**

**PLAZA | FAMILY** | From this lookout you have a marvelous view of Florence and the hills around it, rivaling the vista from the Forte di Belvedere. A copy of Michelangelo's *David* overlooks outdoor cafés packed with tourists during the day and with Florentines in the evening. In May the **Giardino dell'Iris** (Iris Garden) off the piazza is in bloom with more than 2,500 varieties of the flower. The **Giardino delle Rose** (Rose Garden) on the terraces below the piazza is also in full bloom in May and June. ✉ *Florence*.

### **San Miniato al Monte**

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | This church, like the Baptistery, is a fine example of Romanesque architecture and is one of the oldest churches in Florence, dating from the 11th century. A 12th-century mosaic topped by a gilt bronze eagle, emblem of San Miniato's sponsors, the Calimala (cloth merchants'

guild) crowns the lovely green-and-white marble facade. Inside are a 13th-century inlaid-marble floor and apse mosaic. Artist Spinello Aretino (1350–1410) covered the walls of the **Sagrestia** with frescoes depicting scenes from the life of St. Benedict. The **Cappella del Cardinale del Portogallo** (Chapel of the Portuguese Cardinal) is one of the richest 15th-century Renaissance works in Florence. It contains the tomb of a young Portuguese cardinal, Prince James of Lusitania, who died in Florence in 1459. Its glorious ceiling is by Luca della Robbia, and the sculpted tomb by Antonio Rossellino (1427–79). Every day at 5:45 pm, the monks fill the church with the sounds of Gregorian chanting. ✉ *Viale Galileo Galilei, Piazzale Michelangelo, Oltrarno* ☎ 055/2342731 🌐 [www.sanminiatoalmon.te.it](http://www.sanminiatoalmon.te.it).

### Santa Felicità

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | This late Baroque church (its facade was remodeled between 1736 and 1739) contains the mannerist Jacopo Pontormo's *Deposition*, the centerpiece of the Cappella Capponi (executed 1525–28) and a masterpiece of 16th-century Florentine art. The remote figures, which transcend the realm of Renaissance classical form, are portrayed in tangled shapes and intense pastel colors (well preserved because of the low lights in the church), in a space and depth that defy reality. Note, too, the exquisitely frescoed *Annunciation*, also by Pontormo, at a right angle to the *Deposition*. The granite column in the piazza was erected in 1381 and marks a Christian cemetery. ✉ *Piazza Santa Felicità, Via Guicciardini, Palazzo Pitti* ☹ *Closed Sun.*

### Santa Maria del Carmine

**PUBLIC ART** | The **Cappella Brancacci**, at the end of the right transept of this church, houses a masterpiece of Renaissance painting: a fresco cycle that changed the course of Western art. Fire almost destroyed the church in the 18th century; miraculously, the Brancacci Chapel survived almost intact. The cycle is the work of three artists: Masaccio and Masolino (1383–circa 1447), who began it around 1424, and Filippino Lippi, who finished it some 50 years later, after a long interruption during which the sponsoring Brancacci family was exiled. It was Masaccio's work that opened a new frontier for painting, as he was among the first artists to employ single-point perspective; tragically, he died in 1428 at the age of 27, so he didn't live to experience the

revolution his innovations caused.

Masaccio collaborated with Masolino on several of the frescoes, but his style predominates in the *Tribute Money*, on the upper-left wall; *St. Peter Baptizing*, on the upper altar wall; the *Distribution of Goods*, on the lower altar wall; and the *Expulsion of Adam and Eve*, on the chapel's upper-left entrance pier. If you look closely at the last painting and compare it with some of the chapel's other works, you should see a pronounced difference. The figures of Adam and Eve possess a startling presence primarily thanks to the dramatic way in which their bodies seem to reflect light. Masaccio here shaded his figures consistently, so as to suggest a single, strong source of light within the world of the painting but outside its frame. In so doing, he succeeded in imitating with paint the real-world effect of light on mass, and he thereby imparted to his figures a sculptural reality unprecedented in his day.

These matters have to do with technique, but with the *Expulsion of Adam and Eve* his skill went beyond mere technical innovation. In the faces of Adam and Eve, you see more than finely modeled figures; you see terrible shame and suffering depicted with a humanity rarely achieved in art. Reservations to see the chapel are mandatory, but can be booked on the same day. Your time inside is limited to 15 minutes—a frustration that's only partly mitigated by a highly informative 40-minute DVD about the history of the chapel you can watch either before or after your visit. ✉ *Piazza del Carmine, Santo Spirito*  
☎ 055/2768224 reservations 🌐 [www.museiciviciorentini.comune.fi.it](http://www.museiciviciorentini.comune.fi.it) 📄 €6  
🕒 Closed Tues.

## Santo Spirito

RELIGIOUS SITE | The plain, unfinished facade gives nothing away, but the interior, although it appears chilly compared with later churches, is one of the most important examples of Renaissance architecture in Italy.

The interior is one of a pair designed in Florence by Filippo Brunelleschi in the early decades of the 15th century (the other is San Lorenzo). It was here that Brunelleschi supplied definitive solutions to the two major problems of interior Renaissance church design: how to build a cross-shape interior using classical architectural elements borrowed from antiquity and how to reflect in

that interior the order and regularity that Renaissance scientists (among them Brunelleschi himself) were at the time discovering in the natural world around them.

Brunelleschi's solution to the first problem was brilliantly simple: turn a Greek temple inside out. While ancient Greek temples were walled buildings surrounded by classical colonnades, Brunelleschi's churches were classical arcades surrounded by walled buildings. This brilliant architectural idea overthrew the previous era's religious taboo against pagan architecture once and for all, triumphantly claiming that architecture for Christian use.

Brunelleschi's solution to the second problem—making the entire interior orderly and regular—was mathematically precise: he designed the ground plan of the church so that all its parts were proportionally related. The transepts and nave have exactly the same width; the side aisles are precisely half as wide as the nave; the little chapels off the side aisles are exactly half as deep as the side aisles; the chancel and transepts are exactly one-eighth the depth of the nave; and so on, with dizzying exactitude. For Brunelleschi, such a design technique was a matter of passionate conviction. Like most theoreticians of his day, he believed that mathematical regularity and aesthetic beauty were flip sides of the same coin, that one was not possible without the other.

In the refectory, adjacent to the church, you can see Andrea Orcagna's highly damaged fresco of the Crucifixion. ✉ *Piazza Santo Spirito, Florence* 📞 055/2382383 🌐 [www.basilicasantospirito.it](http://www.basilicasantospirito.it) 📮 Church free 🕒 Church closed Wed.

## 📍 Restaurants

### Alla Vecchia Bettola

\$ | TUSCAN | The name doesn't exactly mean "old dive," but it comes pretty close. The recipes here come from "wise grandmothers" and celebrate Tuscan food in its glorious simplicity—prosciutto is sliced with a knife, portions of grilled meat are tender and ample, service is friendly, and the wine list is well priced and good. **Known for:** grilled meats; firmly Tuscan menu; just outside

the centro storico but worth the taxi ride. [💰] *Average main: €14* ✉ *Viale Vasco Pratolini, Oltrarno* ☎ *055/224158* 🕒 *Closed Sun. and Mon.*

### **Borgo Antico**

\$ | PIZZA | In the Oltrarno, try Borgo Antico, which serves fine pizza and other trattoria fare. **Known for:** tasty pizzas; outdoor seating on a beautiful piazza; lively, mostly young, clientele. [💰] *Average main: €14* ✉ *Piazza Santo Spirito 6/r, Santo Spirito* ☎ *055/210437* 🌐 [www.borgoanticofirenze.com](http://www.borgoanticofirenze.com).

### ★ **Fuori Porta**

\$ | WINE BAR | Perhaps the oldest and best wine bar in Florence, this place serves cured meats and cheeses, as well as daily specials. *Crostini* and *crostoni*—grilled breads topped with a mélange of cheeses and meats—are the house specialty; the *verdure sott’olio* (vegetables with oil) are divine. **Known for:** lengthy wine list; *crostini* and *crostoni*; changing daily specials. [💰] *Average main: €11* ✉ *Via Monte alle Croci 10/r, San Niccolò* ☎ *055/2342483* 🌐 [www.fuoriporta.it](http://www.fuoriporta.it).

### **Il Santo Bevitore**

\$\$ | TUSCAN | Florentines and other lovers of good food flock to “The Holy Drinker” for tasty, well-priced dishes. Unpretentious white walls, dark wood furniture, and paper place mats provide the simple decor; start with the exceptional *verdure sott’olio* or the *terrina di fegatini* (a creamy chicken-liver spread) before sampling any of the divine pastas. **Known for:** pasta; *verdure sott’olio*; friendly waitstaff. [💰] *Average main: €16* ✉ *Via Santo Spirito 64/66r, Santo Spirito* ☎ *055/211264* 🌐 [www.ilsantobevitore.com](http://www.ilsantobevitore.com) 🕒 *No lunch Sun.*

### **La Bottega del Buon Caffè**

\$\$\$\$ | MODERN ITALIAN | This recently relocated restaurant (it used to be outside the centro storico) is a symphony in gustatory pleasures in a room with exposed sandy brick walls and high, luminous windows. Executive chef Antonello Sardi is young and gifted, as is his ace brigade. **Known for:** farm to table; cutting-edge fare; stupendous wine list. [💰] *Average main: €45* ✉ *Lungarno, Cellini, 69/r, Oltrarno* ☎ *055/5535677* 🌐 [www.borgointhecity.com](http://www.borgointhecity.com).



## ★ La Casalinga

\$ | TUSCAN | *Casalinga* means “housewife,” and this place, which has been around since 1963, has the nostalgic charm of a mid-century kitchen with Tuscan comfort food to match. If you eat ribollita anywhere in Florence, eat it here—it couldn’t be more authentic. **Known for:** ribollita; liver, Venetian style; often packed. 💰 *Average main: €13* ✉ *Via Michelozzi 9/r, Santo Spirito* ☎ *055/218624* 🌐 [www.trattorialacasalinga.it](http://www.trattorialacasalinga.it) ☹ *Closed Sun., 1 wk at Christmas, and 3 wks in Aug.*

## L’Osteria dell’Enoteca

\$\$ | TUSCAN | This innovative, charming place serves up remarkable food. Anyone looking for sublime bistecca fiorentina should stop here: they serve the cut from four different places on the planet; sample and decide. **Known for:** fantastic primi; secondi with dash and fantasy; beyond gracious service. 💰 *Average main: €15* ✉ *via Romana 70/r* ☎ *055/2286018* 🌐 [www.osteriadellenoteca.com](http://www.osteriadellenoteca.com).

## Osteria Antica Mescita San Niccolò

\$ | TUSCAN | Always crowded, always good, and always inexpensive, the osteria is next to the church of San Niccolò and if you sit in the lower part you’ll find yourself in what was once a chapel dating from the 11th century. The subtle but dramatic background is a nice complement to the food, which is simple Tuscan at its best. **Known for:** delicious soup; great, simple salads; outdoor seating in a small, lovely square. 💰 *Average main: €12* ✉ *Via San Niccolò 60/r, San Niccolò* ☎ *055/2342836* 🌐 [www.osteriasanniccolo.it](http://www.osteriasanniccolo.it).

## Quattro Leoni

\$\$ | ITALIAN | The eclectic staff at this trattoria in a small piazza is an appropriate match for the diverse menu. In winter you can eat in one of two rooms with high ceilings, and in summer you can sit outside and admire the scenery. **Known for:** funky food combinations; reservations recommended; outdoor seating on a quaint piazza. 💰 *Average main: €16* ✉ *Piazza della Passera, Via dei Vellutini 1/r, Palazzo Pitti* ☎ *055/218562* 🌐 [www.4Leoni.it](http://www.4Leoni.it) ☹ *No lunch Wed.*

## Zeb

\$ | TUSCAN | Incredibly tasty and gently priced, Zeb stands for *zuppa e bollito* (soup and boiled things) and nothing at this small *alimentari* (delicatessen) disappoints. It's home-style Tuscan cuisine at its very best, served in unpretentious, intimate surroundings: there's room for only about 15 guests. **Known for:** fantastic soup; terrific pasta; lovely wine list. [💰] *Average main:* €14 ✉ *Via San Miniato 2, Oltrarno* ☎ *055/2342864* 🌐 [www.zebgastronomia.com](http://www.zebgastronomia.com) 🕒 *No dinner Sun.*

## h Hotels

### Hotel Silla

\$\$ | HOTEL | Rooms in this 15th-century palazzo, entered through a courtyard lined with potted plants and sculpture-filled niches, are simply furnished; some have views of the Arno, others have stuccoed ceilings. **Pros:** in the middle of everything except the crowds; cordial, friendly staff; great breakfast. **Cons:** street noise; small rooms; could use an update. [💰] *Rooms from:* €140 ✉ *Via de' Renai 5, San Niccolò* ☎ *055/2342888* 🌐 [www.hotelsilla.it](http://www.hotelsilla.it) 🏠 36 rooms 🍴 | *Free breakfast.*

### Lungarno

\$\$\$\$ | HOTEL | Many rooms and suites here have private terraces that jut out right over the Arno, granting stunning views of the Palazzo Vecchio and the Lungarno; a studio suite in a 13th-century tower preserves details like exposed stone walls and old archways, and looks over a little square with a medieval tower covered in jasmine. **Pros:** upscale without being stuffy; lovely views of the Arno; Borgo San Jacopo, its one-starred Michelin restaurant. **Cons:** rooms without Arno views feel less special; street noise happens; walls can be thin. [💰] *Rooms from:* €585 ✉ *Borgo San Jacopo 14, Oltrarno* ☎ *055/27261* 🌐 [www.lungarnocollection.com](http://www.lungarnocollection.com) 🏠 73 rooms 🍴 | *Free breakfast.*

## Florence's Wine Bars N

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**Cantinetta dei Verrazzano.** In the heart of the centro storico is Cantinetta dei Verrazzano, where serious wines may be had as well as tasty baked treats in the morning and light lunches. ✉ *Via dei Tavolini 18/20/r, Piazza della Signoria* 📞 055/268590.

**Casa del Vino.** Come here for creative panini, such as *sgrombri e carciofini sott'olio* (mackerel and marinated baby artichokes), and an ever-changing list of significant wines by the glass. They also have a well-stocked collection of bottles to go. ✉ *Via dell'Ariente 16/r, San Lorenzo* 📞 055/215609 🌐 [www.casadelvino.it](http://www.casadelvino.it).

**I Fratellini.** A hop, skip, and a jump from Orsanmichele in the centro storico is I Fratellini, in existence since 1875. It sells wines by the glass and has a lengthy list of panini, including pecorino with sun-dried tomatoes and spicy wild-boar salami with goat cheese. ✉ *Via dei Cimatori 38/r, Piazza della Signoria* 📞 055/2396096 🌐 [www.iduefratellini.com](http://www.iduefratellini.com).

**Il Santino.** Though it has only four tables and four small stools at an equally small bar, Il Santino is blessed with a big wine list and superior cheeses, cured meats, and other delicacies to match. ✉ *Via Santo Spirito 60/r, Santo Spirito* 📞 055/2302820 🌐 [www.ilsantobevitore.com](http://www.ilsantobevitore.com).

**Le Volpi e l'Uva.** Le Volpi e l'Uva, which translates as “the foxes and the grape” and is based on one of Aesop’s fables, off Piazza Santa Felicita, is an oenophile’s dream: they pour wines by the glass and serve equally impressive cheeses and bite-size sandwiches to accompany. ✉ *Piazza de’ Rossi 1, Palazzo Pitti* 📞 055/2398132 🌐 [www.levolpieluva.com](http://www.levolpieluva.com).

**Olio & Convivium.** Here you’ll find a great selection of cheeses and cured meats, wines by the glass, food products to take home (like powdered porcini mushrooms), daily specials, as well as some tasty food served in situ. ✉ *Via Santo Spirito 4, Santo Spirito* 📞 055/2658198 🌐 [www.conviviumfirenze.it](http://www.conviviumfirenze.it).

**Pitti Gola.** At Pitti Gola you can order tasty tidbits to accompany your choices from the extensive and impressive wine list. The outdoor seats have a view of Palazzo Pitti. ✉ *Piazza Pitti 16, Palazzo Pitti* 📞 055/212704 🌐 [www.pittigolaecantina.com](http://www.pittigolaecantina.com).

## Palazzo Magnani Feroni

\$\$\$ | HOTEL | The perfect place to play the part of a Florentine aristocrat is here at this 16th-century palazzo, which despite its massive halls and sweeping staircase could almost feel like home. **Pros:** 24-hour room service; generous buffet breakfast; terrific staff. **Cons:** a few steps up to the elevator;

many steps to the rooftop terrace; somewhat removed from sites. 💰 Rooms from: €233 ✉ Borgo San Frediano 5, Santo Spirito ☎ 055/2399544 🌐 [www.palazzomagnaniferoni.com](http://www.palazzomagnaniferoni.com) 🏠 12 suites 🍳 Free breakfast.

## n Nightlife

### Montecarla

GATHERING PLACES | People sip cocktails against a backdrop of exotic flowers, leopard-print chairs and chintz, and red walls on the two crowded floors at Montecarla. ✉ Via de' Bardi 2, San Niccolò ☎ 055/2480918.

### Zoe

BARNS/PUBS | Though it's called a *caffetteria*, and coffee is served (as well as terrific salads and burgers at lunchtime), Zoe's fine cocktails are the real draw for elegant Florentines who come here to see and be seen. ✉ Via de' Renai 13/r, San Niccolò ☎ 055/243111 🌐 [www.zoobar.it](http://www.zoobar.it).

## b Shopping

### ★ Giulio Giannini e Figlio

BOOKS/STATIONERY | One of Florence's oldest paper-goods stores is *the* place to buy the marbled stock, which comes in many shapes and sizes, from flat sheets to boxes and even pencils. ✉ Piazza Pitti 37/r, Oltrarno ☎ 055/212621 🌐 [www.giuliojannini.it](http://www.giuliojannini.it).

### PALAZZO PITTI

#### Maçel

CLOTHING | Browse collections by lesser-known Italian designers, many of whom use the same factories as the A-list, at this women's clothing shop. ✉ Via Guicciardini 128/r, Palazzo Pitti ☎ 055/287355.

### ★ Madova

SHOES/LUGGAGE/LEATHER GOODS | Complete your winter wardrobe with a pair of high-quality leather gloves, available in a rainbow of colors and a

choice of linings (silk, cashmere, and unlined), from Madova. They've been in business for 100 years. ✉ *Via Guicciardini 1/r, Palazzo Pitti* ☎ 055/2396526 🌐 [www.madova.com](http://www.madova.com).

## **Pitti Mosaici**

HOUSEHOLD ITEMS/FURNITURE | Stones are worked into exquisite tables, pictures, and jewelry at Pitti Mosaici, which continues the pietre dure tradition that was all the rage of 16th-century Florence. ✉ *Piazza dei Pitti 23/r, Palazzo Pitti* ☎ 055/282127 🌐 [www.pittimosaici.com](http://www.pittimosaici.com).

## **Sara Amrhein**

JEWELRY/ACCESSORIES | This California girl, a long-term resident of Florence, crafts one-of-a-kind jewelry in an atelier. ✉ *Via dello Sprone 9-11/r, Sant'Ambrogio* ☎ 39/3929613197 🌐 [www.sara-amrhein.com](http://www.sara-amrhein.com).

## **SANTO SPIRITO**

### **Santo Spirito flea market**

OUTDOOR/FLEA/GREEN MARKETS | The second Sunday of every month brings the Santo Spirito flea market. On the third Sunday of the month, vendors at the Fierucola organic fest sell such delectables as honeys, jams, spice mixes, and fresh vegetables. ✉ *Florence*.

## **SAN NICCOLÒ**

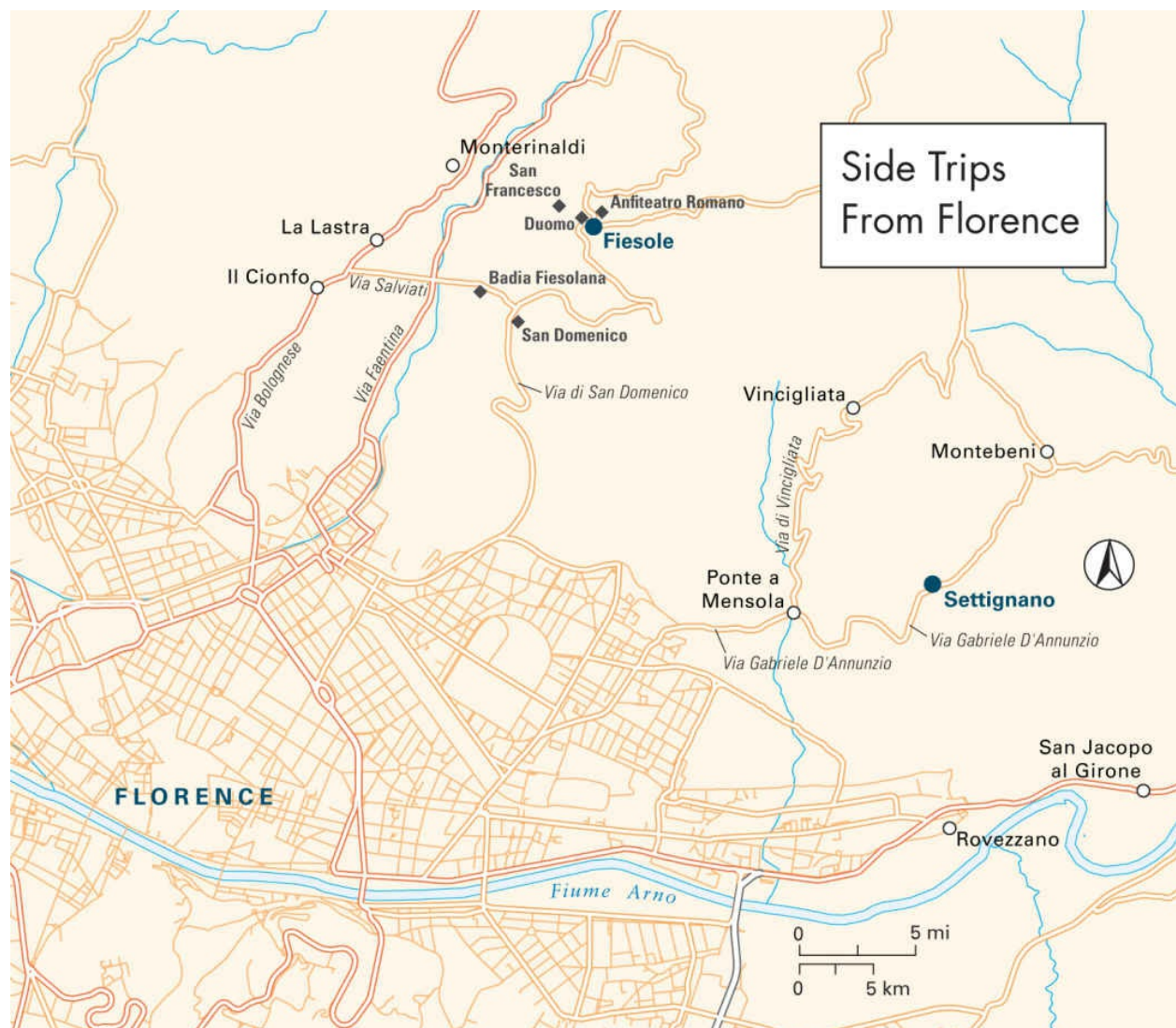
### **★ Il Torchio**

BOOKS/STATIONERY | Photograph albums, frames, diaries, and other objects dressed in handmade paper are high quality, and the prices lower than usual. ✉ *Via dei Bardi 17, San Niccolò* ☎ 055/2342862 🌐 [www.legatoriailtorchio.com](http://www.legatoriailtorchio.com).

## Side Trips from Florence

### Fiesole

A half-day excursion to Fiesole, in the hills 8 km (5 miles) above Florence, gives you a pleasant respite from museums and a wonderful view of the city. Fiesole began life as an ancient Etruscan and later Roman village that held some power until it succumbed to barbarian invasions. Eventually it gave up its independence in exchange for Florence's protection. The medieval cathedral, ancient Roman amphitheater, and lovely old villas behind garden walls are clustered on a series of hilltops. A walk around Fiesole can take from one to two or three hours.



## GETTING HERE AND AROUND

The trip from Florence by car takes 20 to 30 minutes. Drive to Piazza Libertà and cross the Ponte Rosso heading in the direction of the SS65/SR65. Turn right on to Via Salviati and continue on to Via Roccettini. Make a left turn to Via Vecchia Fiesolana, which will take you directly to the center of town. There are several possible routes for the two-hour walk from central Florence to Fiesole. One route begins in a residential area of Florence called Salviatino (Via Barbacane, near Piazza Edison, on the Bus 7 route), and after a short time, offers peeks over garden walls of beautiful villas, as well as the view over your shoulder at the panorama of Florence in the valley. A city bus can also get you there with much greater ease.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS Fiesole Tourism Office.** ✉ *Via Portigiani 3, Fiesole* ☎ 055/5961311 🌐 [www.fiesoleforyou.it](http://www.fiesoleforyou.it)

## S Sights

### **Anfiteatro Romano** (*Roman Amphitheater*)

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE** | The beautifully preserved 2,000-seat Anfiteatro Romano, near the Duomo, dates from the 1st century BC and is still used for summer concerts. To the right of the amphitheater are the remains of the **Terme Romani** (Roman Baths), where you can see the gymnasium, hot and cold baths, and rectangular chamber where the water was heated. A beautifully designed **Museo Archeologico**, its facade evoking an ancient Roman temple, is built amid the ruins and contains objects dating from as early as 2000 BC. The nearby **Museo Bandini** is filled with the private collection of Canon Angelo Maria Bandini (1726–1803); he fancied 13th- to 15th-century Florentine paintings, terracotta pieces, and wood sculpture, which he later bequeathed to the Diocese of Fiesole. ✉ *Via Portigiani 1, Fiesole* ☎ 055/5961293 🌐 [www.museidifiesole.it](http://www.museidifiesole.it) 📄 €12, includes access to archaeological park and museums 🕒 Closed Tues. in Nov.–Feb.

### **Badia Fiesolana**

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | From the church of San Domenico it's a five-minute walk northwest to the Badia Fiesolana, which was Fiesole's original cathedral. Dating to the 11th century, it was first the home of the Camaldolese monks. Thanks to Cosimo il Vecchio, the complex was substantially restructured. The facade, never completed owing to Cosimo's death, contains elements of its original Romanesque decoration. ✉ *Via della Badia dei Roccettini 11, Fiesole* ☎ 055/46851 🌐 [www.eui.eu](http://www.eui.eu) 🕒 Closed Sat. afternoon and Sun.

### **Duomo**

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | A stark medieval interior yields many masterpieces. In the raised presbytery, the **Cappella Salutati** was frescoed by 15th-century artist Cosimo Rosselli, but it was his contemporary, sculptor Mino da Fiesole (1430–84), who put the town on the artistic map. The Madonna on the



altarpiece and the tomb of Bishop Salutati are fine examples of the artist's work. ☒ *Piazza Mino da Fiesole, Fiesole.*

### San Domenico

RELIGIOUS SITE | If you really want to stretch your legs, walk 4 km (2½ miles) toward the center of Florence along Via Vecchia Fiesolana, a narrow lane in use since Etruscan times, to the church of San Domenico. Sheltered in the church is the *Madonna and Child with Saints* by Fra Angelico, who was a Dominican friar here before he moved to Florence. ☒ *Piazza San Domenico, off Via Giuseppe Mantellini, Fiesole* ☹ *Closed Sun.*

### San Francesco

RELIGIOUS SITE | This lovely hilltop church has a good view of Florence and the plain below from its terrace and benches. Off the little cloister is a small, eclectic museum containing, among other things, two Egyptian mummies. Halfway up the hill you'll see sloping steps to the right; they lead to a fragrant wooded park with trails that loop out and back to the church. ☒ *Fiesole.*

## r Restaurants

### La Reggia degli Etruschi

\$\$ | ITALIAN | Located on a steep hill on the way up to the church of San Francesco, this lovely little eatery is certainly worth the trek. Indulge in inventive reworkings of Tuscan classics, like the *mezzaluna di pera a pecorino* (little half-moon pasta stuffed with pear and pecorino) sauced with Roquefort and poppy seeds. **Known for:** out-of-the-way location; good wine list and friendly service; small terrace with outdoor seating. ☒ *Average main: €21* ☒ *Via San Francesco, Fiesole* ☎ *055/59385* 🌐 [www.lareggiadeglietruschi.com](http://www.lareggiadeglietruschi.com).

## h Hotels

## Villa Aurora

\$ | HOTEL | The attractive, simply furnished hotel on the main piazza takes advantage of its hilltop spot, with beautiful views in many of the rooms, some of which are on two levels with beamed ceilings and balconies. **Pros:** some rooms have pretty views; air quality better than in Florence; soothing swimming pool. **Cons:** no elevator; steps to breakfast room; you either need a car or have to rely on city buses. 💰 Rooms from: €109 ✉ Piazza Mino da Fiesole 39, Fiesole ☎ 055/59363 🌐 [www.villaurorafiesole.com](http://www.villaurorafiesole.com) ➡ 23 rooms 🍳 Free breakfast.

## Villa San Michele

\$\$\$\$ | HOTEL | The cypress-lined driveway provides an elegant preamble to this incredibly gorgeous (and very expensive) hotel nestled in the hills of Fiesole. **Pros:** exceptional convent conversion; stunning views; shuttle bus makes frequent forays to and from Florence. **Cons:** money must be no object; some rooms are small; you must either depend upon the shuttle bus or have a car. 💰 Rooms from: €450 ✉ Via Doccia 4, Fiesole ☎ 055/5678200 🌐 [www.belmond.com](http://www.belmond.com) 🕒 Closed Nov.–Easter ➡ 45 rooms 🍳 No meals.

# p Performing Arts

## Estate Fiesolana

FESTIVALS | From June through August, Estate Fiesolana, a festival of theater, music, dance, and film, takes place in Fiesole's churches and in the Roman amphitheater—demonstrating that the ancient Romans knew a thing or two about acoustics. ✉ Teatro Romano, Fiesole ☎ 055/59611 🌐 [www.comune.fiesole.fi.it](http://www.comune.fiesole.fi.it).

## Settignano

When Florence is overcrowded and hot, this village, a 20-minute car or bus trip east of Florence, is particularly appealing. It was the birthplace of many artists, including the sculptors Desiderio di Settignano (circa 1428–64), Antonio (1427–79), Bernardo (1409–64), Rossellino, and Bartolomeo Ammannati (1511–92). Michelangelo's wet nurse was the wife of a

stonecutter in Settignano, and to her he attributed his later calling in life.

## GETTING HERE AND AROUND

To get to the village, take Bus 10 from the station at Santa Maria Novella or at Piazza San Marco, all the way to the end of the line, the *capolinea*. It will put you in the middle of Settignano's piazzetta.

## r Restaurants

### Osvaldo

\$ | TUSCAN | If you're making the trip to Settignano, this is a great dining option (get off Bus 10 at the stop called Ponte a Mensola). The small, unassuming family-run trattoria is situated along a street and a tiny stream; if you sit outside (there are no views, alas), you might hear the trickle of the stream. **Known for:** fantastic pasta made in-house; zuppa inglese; locals love the place. 💰 *Average main: €12* ✉ *Via G. D'Annunzio 51/r, Settignano* ☎ *055/603972* 🌐 [www.trattoriaosvaldo.it](http://www.trattoriaosvaldo.it) 😊 *Closed Wed. No lunch Tues.*

## h Hotels

### Fattoria di Maiano

\$\$ | RENTAL | FAMILY | In the foothills between Florence and Fiesole are these lovely apartments, which sleep 4–11 people and rent by the week. **Pros:** great way to have a country experience with the city nearby; beautiful views and clean air; the pool when it's hot. **Cons:** a car is an absolute necessity. 💰 *Rooms from: €130* ✉ *Via Benedetto da Maiano 11, Fiesole* ☎ *055/599600, 055/599640* 🌐 [www.fattoriadimaiano.com](http://www.fattoriadimaiano.com) ➡ *8 rooms, 12 apartments* 🍳 *Free breakfast.*

# EATING AND DRINKING WELL IN FLORENCE

In Florence, simply prepared meats, grilled or roasted, are the culinary stars, usually paired with seasonal vegetables like artichokes or porcini. Bistecca is popular here, but there's plenty more that tastes great on the grill, too.

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Traditionalists go for their gustatory pleasures in trattorie and osterie, places where decor is unimportant and place mats are mere paper. Culinary innovation comes slowly in this town, though some cutting-edge restaurants have been appearing.

By American standards, Florentines eat late: 1:30 or 2 pm is typical for lunch and 9 pm for dinner is considered early. Consuming a primo, secondo, and dolce is largely a thing of the past. For lunch, many Florentines simply grab a panino and a glass of wine at a bar. Those opting for a simple trattoria lunch often order a plate of pasta and dessert.

## STALE AND STELLAR

Stale bread is the basis for three classic Florentine primi: *pappa al pomodoro*, *ribollita*, and *panzanella*. Pappa is made with either fresh or canned tomatoes and that stale bread. Ribollita is a vegetable soup with *cavolo nero*, cannellini beans, and thickened with bread. Panzanella is reconstituted Tuscan bread combined with tomatoes, cucumber, and basil. They all are enhanced with a generous application of fragrant Tuscan olive oil.

## A CLASSIC ANTIPASTO: CROSTINI DI FEGATINI

This beloved dish consists of a chicken-liver spread, served warm or at room temperature, on toasted, garlic-rubbed bread. It can be served smooth, like a pâté, or in a chunkier, more rustic version. It's made by sautéing chicken livers with finely diced carrot and onion, enlivened with the addition of wine, broth, or Marsala reductions, and mashed anchovies and capers.

## A CLASSIC SECONDO: BISTECCA FIORENTINA

The town's culinary pride and joy is a thick slab of beef, resembling a T-bone steak, from large white oxen called Chianina. The meat's slapped on the grill and served rare, sometimes with a pinch of salt.

It's always seared on both sides, and just barely cooked inside.

## A CLASSIC CONTORNO: CANNELLINI BEANS

Simply boiled, they provide the perfect accompaniment to bistecca. The small white beans are best when they go straight from the garden into the pot. They should be anointed with a generous dose

of Tuscan olive oil; the combination is oddly felicitous, and it goes a long way toward explaining why Tuscans are referred to as *mangiafagioli* (bean eaters) by other Italians.

#### **A CLASSIC DOLCE: *BISCOTTI DI PRATO***

These are sometimes the only dessert on offer. *Biscotti* means twice-cooked (or, in this case, twice baked). They are hard almond cookies that soften considerably when dipped languidly into *vin santo* (“holy wine”), a sweet dessert wine, or into a simple *caffè*.

#### **A CLASSIC WINE: *CHIANTI CLASSICO***

This blend from the region just south of Florence relies mainly on the local, hardy *sangiovese* grape; it’s aged for at least one year before hitting the market. (*Riserve*—reserves—are aged at least an additional six months.)

Chianti is usually the libation of choice for Florentines. Traditionalists opt for the younger, fruitier (and usually less expensive) versions often served in straw flasks. You can sample Chianti Classico all over town, and buy it in local supermarkets.



## Chapter 4

# PISA, LUCCA, AND NORTHWEST TUSCANY

Updated by  
Patricia Rucidlo



 Sights  
★★★★★

 Restaurants  
★★★★★

 Hotels  
★★★★☆

 Shopping  
★★★★☆

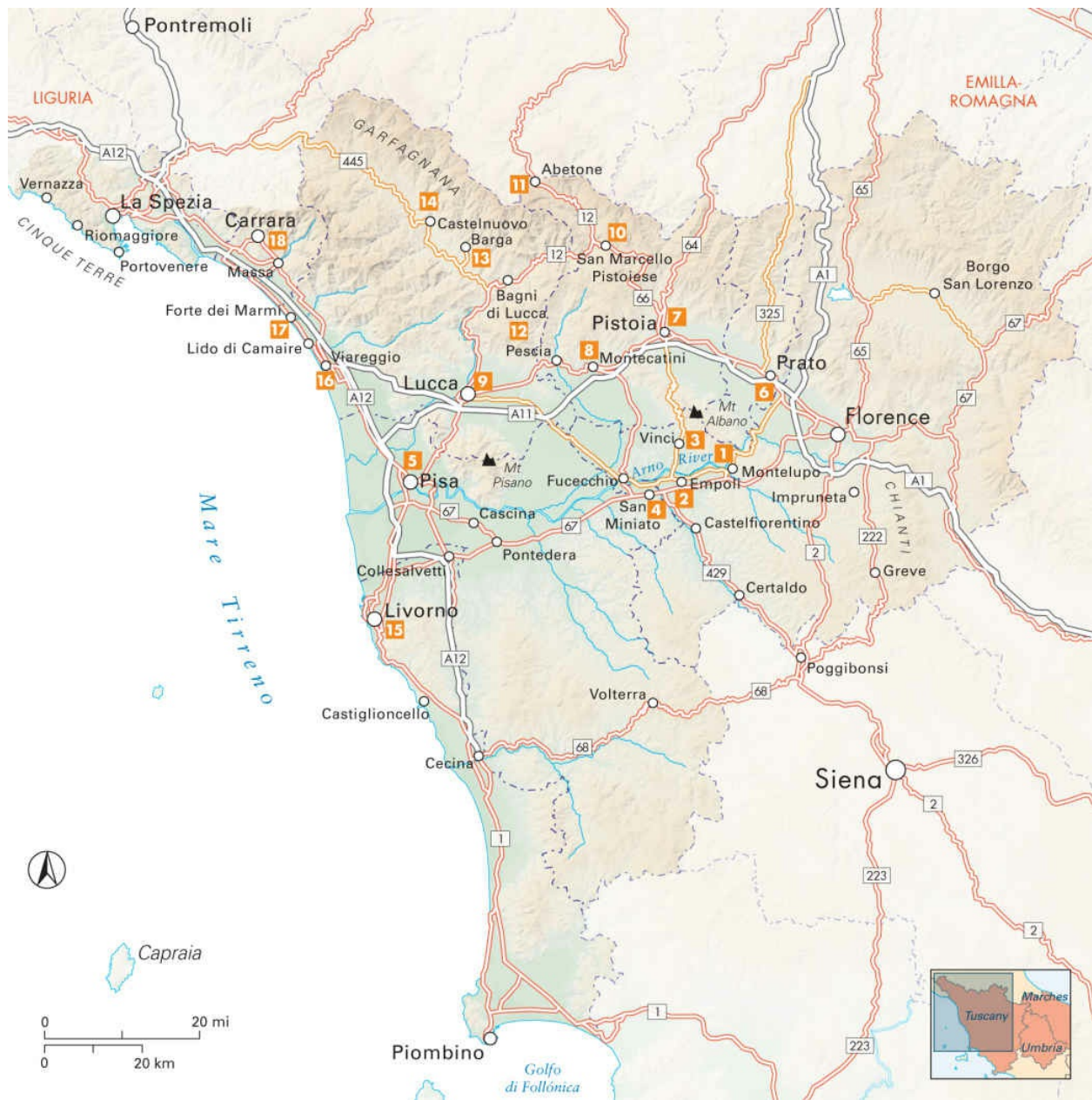
 Nightlife  
★★★★☆

# WELCOME TO PISA, LUCCA, AND NORTHWEST TUSCANY

## TOP REASONS TO GO

- ★ **Leaning Tower of Pisa:** It may be touristy, but it's still a whole lot of fun to climb to the top and admire the view.
- ★ **Olive-oil tasting in and around Lucca:** Italian olive oil is justifiably world famous, and cognoscenti insist that the best is found here.
- ★ **Cappella Maggiore, Duomo, Prato:** Filippo Lippi's solemn frescoes depicting scenes from the lives of John the Baptist and St. Stephen positively glow.
- ★ **Bagni di Lucca:** This sleepy little town attracted the English Romantics, among others, who were drawn to its salubrious waters and air.
- ★ **Tomb of Ilaria del Carretto, Duomo, Lucca:** Check out this moving sculpture by Jacopo della Quercia commemorating a young woman who died in childbirth.





- 1 Montelupo.** This town has produced ceramics for centuries.
- 2 Empoli.** Of Dante's *Inferno* fame.
- 3 Vinci.** The namesake of Leonard da Vinci.
- 4 San Miniato.** A well-preserved hill town.
- 5 Pisa.** There's more than just its leaning tower.

- 6 Prato.** Famous for its wool industry.
- 7 Pistoia.** Known for its rail vehicle industry and plant nurseries.
- 8 Montecatini Terme.** As seen in Fellini's *8½*.
- 9 Lucca.** Historic town with 99 churches.
- 10 San Marcello Pistoiese.** A ski destination in winter.
- 11 Abetone.** Vacation spot set in the Apennine mountains.
- 12 Bagni Di Lucca.** Former home of poet Percy Shelley.
- 13 Barga.** The Buffalo Soldiers defended this region in WWII.
- 14 Castelnuovo Di Garfagnana.** Visit its busy historic center.
- 15 Livorna.** A stopover for Britons in 19th century, and sadly destroyed in WWII.
- 16 Viarregio.** Visitors flock to this beach town in the summer.
- 17 Forte Dei Marmi.** The East Hampton of Italy.
- 18 Carrara.** The rocks here inspired Michelangelo.

**Lucca and Pisa are the most-visited cities of northwest Tuscany, and with good reason: Lucca has a charming historic center set within its 16th-century walls, and Pisa is home to what may be the most famous tower in the world. Both cities are due west of Florence; the landscape along the way isn't Tuscany's finest, but it has several smaller cities with low-key appeal: good restaurants, a few noteworthy sights, and a taste of Italian life away from the main tourism centers.**

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Farther north the setting gets more impressive. Craggy, often snowcapped mountains rise above sparsely populated valleys, accessed by narrow winding roads. This is the Garfagnana, Tuscany's most mountainous territory, cut through by the majestic Alpi Apuane. The steep terrain rolls down into pine-forested hills and eventually meets the wide, sandy beaches of the Ligurian Sea. Along this stretch, known as the Versilian Coast, are the resort towns of Viareggio and Forte dei Marmi, both of which pack in Italian and other European beachgoers in the summer.

### **MAJOR REGIONS**

**Towns west of Florence.** At industrial centers from the Middle Ages such as **Prato** and **Pistoia**, you can relax far from Florence's throngs and savor fine food and some art gems. Fragrant white truffles adorn many a restaurant menu in **San Miniato**.

**Pisa.** Thanks to an engineering mistake, the name Pisa is recognized the world over. The Leaning Tower, the baptistery, the Camposanto, and the cathedral make an impressive foursome on the Piazza del Duomo.

**Lucca.** This laid-back yet elegant town is surrounded by tree-bedecked 16th-century ramparts that are now a delightful promenade.

**The Garfagnana.** Sports enthusiasts and nature addicts flock to **Abetone** to ski in winter and refresh themselves with cool, mountain air in summer.

**The Northwest Coast.** Experience Italian beach culture at **Forte dei Marmi**, a crowded and expensive place to see and be seen.

# Planner

## Beach Know-How

You may not think of Tuscany as a beach destination, but its long coastline is popular with Italian vacationers. From June through August the resort towns of Viareggio, Forte dei Marmi, and Marina di Massa are packed with beachgoers. Bagni (bathhouses) open, and the sands fill with colorful umbrellas and beach chairs; you can rent your own for about €20 a day and upward.

## Making the Most of Your Time

The majority of first-time visitors to Tuscany start out by exploring Florence, and then are lured south by the Chianti district and Siena. Heading west instead is an appealing alternative. **Pisa** is the main attraction, and it certainly isn't short on tourists. If that's all you want (or have time) to see here, you're probably best off doing it as a day trip from Florence. If you want to stick around for a while, consider making **Lucca** your base. It's a tremendously appealing town, with fine food and an easygoing atmosphere.

From Lucca you can discover the rest of the area on day trips. The **Garfagnana** has gorgeous mountain peaks and excellent hiking opportunities (as well as skiing in winter).

## Getting Here and Around

### **BUS TRAVEL**

Many of the cities in the region do have bus stations, but service is often sporadic or complicated; it's easier to take the train to Pisa, Prato, Pistoia, Lucca, Montecatini Terme, Livorno, and Empoli, where service is regular and trains run frequently. San Miniato and environs are best reached by car, as service is limited.

It's possible to take a bus from Pistoia or Florence to get to Abetone. A car is necessary to see Carrara and the rest of the Versilian Coast because bus service is dicey.

There are two primary bus lines.

### **COPIT**

This bus service connects Empoli, Montelupo, Florence, Prato, and Pistoia; it also has Florence–Abetone service. ☎ *0573/3630 in Pistoia* 🌐 [www.copitspa.it](http://www.copitspa.it).

### **SITA**

This bus service connects Florence and Empoli. ☎ *055/47821 in Florence* 🌐 [www.busitalia.it](http://www.busitalia.it).

### **CAR TRAVEL**

The best way to explore the region is by car—and part of the fun is stopping to take in the scenery. In the northern part of the region, towns are spread out and driving the winding mountain roads adds to your travel time.

The A1 autostrada connects Florence to Prato; for Pistoia, Montecatini, and Lucca, follow signs for Firenze Nord, which connects to the A11. For Empoli, Pisa, and hill towns west, take the Strada Grande Comunicazione Firenze-Pisa-Livorno, commonly known as the Fi-Pi-Li and sometimes indicated on signage as S.G.C. Firenze-Pisa-Livorno, from Scandicci, just outside Florence. (Note that the Fi-Pi-Li is notorious for its frequent delays due to accidents and construction.)

### **TRAIN TRAVEL**

Two main train lines run from Florence's Santa Maria Novella station into northwest Tuscany—one traveling through Prato, Pistoia, Montecatini, and Lucca; the other through Empoli and Pisa. The two lines meet up on the coast with a line that runs through Livorno, Viareggio, and La Spezia.

Trains are a viable option if you're going to any of these cities. For the rest of northwest Tuscany, train connections are extremely limited or nonexistent.

## Hotels

Excluding the beach resort towns, lodging is generally a better deal here than in much of the rest of Tuscany; some real bargains can be found in off-the-beaten-path towns. Consider staying at an *agriturismo*, a farm or vineyard with guest accommodations, which can range from rustic to stately. Many area hotel restaurants serve excellent food, and meal plans are usually available as supplements to your room rate. In summer, when Florence is hot and crowded, it's not a bad plan to base yourself in one of the surrounding towns and use the train to make day trips into the city.

### What It Costs in Euros

\$	\$\$	\$\$\$	\$\$\$\$
<b>RESTAURANTS</b>			
under €15	€15–€24	€25– €35	over €35
<b>HOTELS</b>			
under €125	€125– €200	€201– €300	over €300

# Montelupo

*30 km (19 miles) southwest of Florence, 6 km (4 miles) east of Empoli.*

This small town, which straddles the Arno, and its surrounding villages, have been producing ceramics for centuries. A ceramics museum proudly displays the work of the past, but the finest tribute to the tradition is the fact that top-quality ceramics are still handmade in the region. Montelupo's centro storico is filled with shops selling the finished product.

## GETTING HERE

Train service does run from Florence's Santa Maria Novella to Montelupo. It's also an easy drive on the Fi-Pi-Li highway.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS** **Montelupo tourism office.** ✉ *Piazza Vittorio Veneto 10, Montelupo Fiorentino* ☎ *0571/51352* 🌐 [www.museomontelupo.it](http://www.museomontelupo.it).

## S Sights

**Museo della Ceramica** (*Museum of Archaeology and Ceramics*)

**MUSEUM** | The Museo della Ceramica has some 3,000 pieces of majolica, a type of glazed pottery made in this region since the early 14th century. The museum is beautifully lighted; objects dating from the early 14th century to the late 18th century are well labeled and arranged, and provide a good overview of the region's ceramics-making history. There's also an interesting display of the coats of arms of important Renaissance families such as the Medici and Strozzi. ✉ *Piazza Vittorio Veneto 10, Montelupo Fiorentino* ☎ *0571/51352* 🌐 [www.museomontelupo.it](http://www.museomontelupo.it) 🗨 *From €5* 🕒 *Closed Mon.*

## p Performing Arts



## FESTIVALS

### Festa della Ceramica

**FESTIVALS** | Every June, Montelupo hosts the weeklong Festa della Ceramica, a ceramics festival that includes exhibitions of local and international art, demonstrations of techniques new and ancient, street theater and music—and, of course, sales of ceramics from around the world. Additional information about the ceramics festival is available from the Montelupo Fiorentino tourist office. ✉ *Montelupo Fiorentino* ☎ *0571/51352 tourist office.*

## b Shopping

Many of the pieces for sale at Montelupo's ceramics shops follow traditional styles, but some artists bring modern inspiration to their wheels. Note that not all of the stores will ship items home for you.

### Bartoloni: La Ceramica Tradizionale di Montelupo

**CERAMICS/GLASSWARE** | Bartoloni: La Ceramica Tradizionale di Montelupo, down the road from the Museo della Ceramica, produces objects in a range of styles. ✉ *Corso Garibaldi 36, Montelupo Fiorentino* ☎ *0571/913569* 🌐 [www.ceramicabartoloni.it/sito/dove\\_siamo.htm](http://www.ceramicabartoloni.it/sito/dove_siamo.htm).

### Ceramica ND Dolfi

**CERAMICS/GLASSWARE** | Ceramica ND Dolfi has been in the family for three generations. It's a ceramics-making compound located 3 km (2 miles) from Montelupo on the road heading east toward Florence, where you'll find a sun-drenched *spazio aziendale* (selling floor), a factory workshop, the family residence, and a yard where terracotta planters are displayed. The ceramics, all priced reasonably given the high-quality handcrafted work, include large vases, plates suitable for hanging, and brightly colored serving pieces for the table. ✉ *Via Toscoromagnola 1, Località Antinoro, Montelupo Fiorentino* ☎ *0571/51264* 🌐 [www.nddolfi.it](http://www.nddolfi.it).

### Le Ceramiche del Borgo

**CERAMICS/GLASSWARE** | Le Ceramiche del Borgo sells the work of Eugenio Taccini, which includes bowls, platters, tiles, and plates. The store's

proprietor (and artist's daughter), Lea Taccini, speaks English. ✉ XX  
Settembre 30, Empoli ☎ 0571/518856 🌐 [www.galleriartigianato.it](http://www.galleriartigianato.it).

# Empoli

*33 km (21 miles) west of Florence, 50 km (31 miles) east of Pisa.*

Empoli, roughly halfway between Florence and Pisa, is a small town with a long history. References to the city first appear in documents from the 800s. By the late 12th century it was under the control of Florence. It was here in 1260, after the Battle of Montaperti, that Farinata degli Uberti, leader of the Ghibellines, decided not to burn Florence to the ground. Dante immortalized this decision in Canto X of his *Inferno*.

Now Empoli is a sleepy little town a quick train ride from Florence. If you're traveling in summer, when Florence is at its hottest and most crowded, you might consider staying here and hopping on the train for day trips into the city. But don't overlook the sights of Empoli itself—they're worth seeing.

## GETTING HERE

Empoli is an easy 20-minute train ride from Florence's Santa Maria Novella station. If you're driving, take the Fi-Pi-Li—and head out armed with patience. The road is regularly under construction, and there are often delays due to accidents. Lazzi provides bus service from Florence to Empoli.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

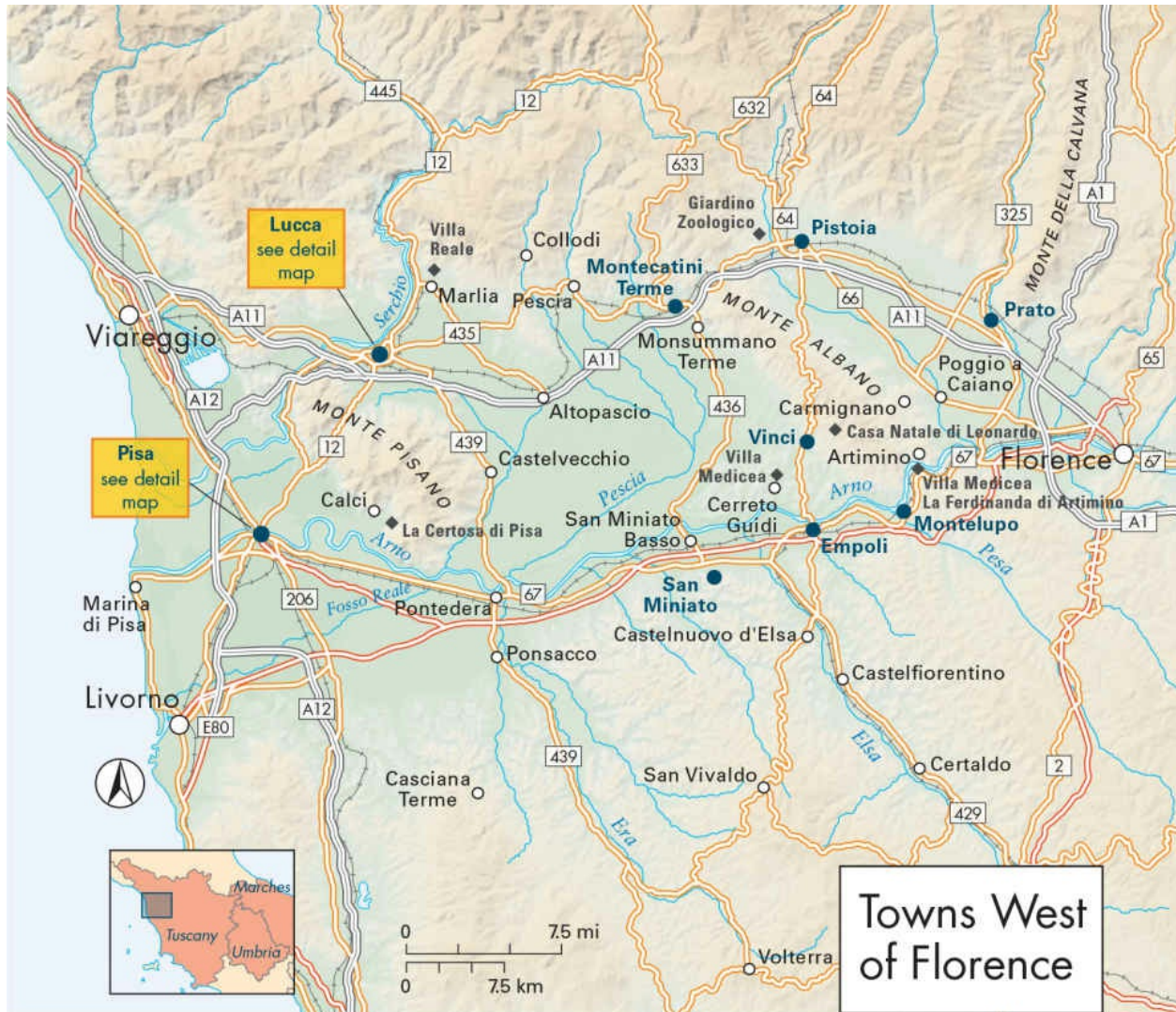
**CONTACTS** **Empoli tourism office.** ✉ *Piazza Farinata degli Uberti 3* 📞  
*0571/55671, 0571/757976* 🌐 [www.toscananelcuore.it](http://www.toscananelcuore.it).

# S Sights

## Collegiata di Sant'Andrea

**MUSEUM** | The Collegiata di Sant'Andrea is a jewel of a museum, filled with terracotta sculptures from the della Robbia school, including one by Andrea della Robbia. There's also a magnificent 15th-century fresco pietà by Masolino (circa 1383–1440), as well as a small work by Fra Filippo Lippi (1406–69) and a wonderful tabernacle attributed to Francesco Botticini (circa

1446–97) and Antonio Rossellino (1427–79). On Sunday afternoons, entrance to the museum is free. ✉ *Just off Piazza Farinata degli Uberti* ☎ 0571/76284 🚗 *From €4* 🕒 *Closed Mon.*



### San Michele in Pontorme

RELIGIOUS SITE | A short but not very scenic walk from the center of town brings you to the little church of San Michele in Pontorme, chiefly notable for the gorgeous *St. John the Baptist* and *St. Michael the Archangel*, two works dating from about 1519 by native son Jacopo Carrucci (1494–1556), better known as Pontormo. ✉ *Piazza San Michele* 🚗 *Free.*

### Santo Stefano

RELIGIOUS SITE | Originally founded by Augustinians in the 11th century, the

church of Santo Stefano can be visited only by requesting a tour in the Collegiata di Sant'Andrea. It's worth the walk around the corner and down the street to see the *sinopie* (preparatory drawings) by Masolino depicting scenes from the *Legend of the True Cross*. He left without actually frescoing them; it may be that the Augustinian friars were late in making payment. ✉ Via de' Neri ☎ 0571/76284 📬 Free with admission to the Collegiata 🕒 Closed Mon.

## Villa Medicea

**HOUSE** | On the night of July 15, 1576, Isabella de' Medici, daughter of the all-powerful Cosimo I, grand duke of Tuscany, was murdered by her husband in the Villa Medicea in the town of Cerreto Guidi for "reasons of honor"—that is, she was suspected of adultery. These days, although the villa's formal garden is in somewhat imperfect condition, the vast halls and chambers within remain majestic. Copies of portraits of various Medici, including Isabella, cover the walls. The villa sits atop the highest point in Cerreto Guidi, encircled by two narrow streets where the daily business of the town goes on. As you stand on the wide, flat front lawn, high above the streets of the town, with the villa behind you and terraced hillsides of olive groves and vineyards stretching into the distance, you can imagine what it was like to be a Medici. To see the villa, ring the bell for the custodian. ✉ 8 km (5 miles) west of Empoli, Cerreto Guidi ☎ 0571/55707 🌐 [www.polomuseale.firenze.it](http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it) 📬 Free 🕒 Closed 2nd and 3rd Mon. of month.

## Going Local at Festivals p

A great way to get a feel for the region and its people is to attend a local *sagra* (festival). During the summer there's one taking place nearly every weekend in some small town or village, usually with a food theme, such as a *sagra dei funghi* (mushroom festival) or *sagra della zuppa* (soup festival). Held at night, the events dish out plenty to eat and drink, and there's usually dancing, sometimes with live music. Old-school ballroom moves are the norm; you're likely to see couples fox-trotting or doing the tango.

These are village affairs, with few people speaking English. There are no numbers to call for

information. The festivals are advertised only by crudely printed signs on the side of the road. Attending a sagra is a unique opportunity to experience small-town Italian culture.

## r Restaurants

### Vinegar

\$ | ITALIAN | This bar near the train station sells all sorts of *panini* (sandwiches) as well as coffee and *aperitivi* (cocktails). It's a great spot to grab a sandwich before hopping on the bus to Vinci. **Known for:** pizza available at night. 💰 *Average main: €4* ✉ *Piazza della Vittoria 36–37* ☎ *0571/74630* 🚫 *No credit cards.*

# Vinci

*10 km (6 miles) north of Empoli, 45 km (28 miles) west of Florence.*

The small hill town from which Leonardo da Vinci derived his name is a short drive or bus ride north of Empoli. At the church of Santa Croce, near the town square, you can see the baptismal font in which Leonardo was baptized. But if you want to see the house where he was born, you'll have to travel to Anchiano, 3 km (2 miles) north of Vinci. Though it's somewhat of a tourist trap, a trip to Vinci is worth the effort for the views alone.

## GETTING HERE

To get to Vinci via public transportation, take the train to Empoli, then catch a PiuBus bus to Vinci.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS Vinci tourism office.** ✉ *Via delle Torre 11* ☎ 0571/568012 🌐 [www.toscananelcuore.it](http://www.toscananelcuore.it).

# S Sights

## Casa Natale di Leonardo

**HOUSE** | No one knows the precise location of Leonardo da Vinci's birthplace, but this typical 15th-century Tuscan house is in the general vicinity and probably shares much in common with the house where he was born. It's in Anchiano, 3 km (2 miles) from Vinci, and can be reached easily on foot or by car. It has a primitive interior—it hasn't been gussied up for tourists. Note the printed inventory of Leonardo's library. His tastes in literature were wide-ranging, from the ancients to contemporary (15th-century) authors. ✉ *Località Anchiano* ☎ 0571/55707 🌐 [www.toscananelcuore.it](http://www.toscananelcuore.it) 🏠 €1.

## Museo Leonardiano

**MUSEUM** | Museo Leonardiano, atop the castle belonging to the Guidi family in the historic center of Vinci, has replicas of many of Leonardo's machines

and gadgets. The stunning country views most likely influenced the artist, as some of his painted backgrounds suggest the hills of Vinci. ✉ *Via della Torre 2* ☎ 0571/933251 🌐 [www.museoleonardiano.it](http://www.museoleonardiano.it) 🎫 €11.



# San Miniato

*20 km (12 miles) southwest of Vinci, 43 km (27 miles) west of Florence.*

San Miniato has a history dating to Etruscan and Roman times; today it's a tiny, pristine hill town of narrow streets lined with austere 13th- to 17th-century facades, some covering buildings that are centuries older. The Holy Roman Empire had very strong ties here—the local castle was built in 962 under the aegis of Otto I (912–973). Eventually the town, with its Ghibelline (pro-imperial) sympathies, passed into the hands of the Florentines. San Miniato's artistic treasures are limited by Tuscan standards, but the town's prettiness makes a visit worthwhile. On three weekends in November an annual truffle festival adds to San Miniato's allure; it's well worth visiting if you're in the area. The food stalls teem with fantastic local stuff, while restaurants are crammed with locals and visitors chowing down on truffled things.

## GETTING HERE

The easiest way to get to San Miniato is by car via the Fi-Pi-Li. The San Miniato train station is far from the centro storico.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS** **San Miniato tourism office.** ✉ *Piazza del Popolo 3* 📞  
0571/42745 🌐 [www.sanminiatopromozione.it](http://www.sanminiatopromozione.it).

## S Sights

**Convento di San Francesco** (*Convent and Church of St. Francis*)

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | In 1211 St. Francis founded the Convento di San Francesco, which contains two cloisters and an ornate wooden choir. For a dose of monastic living, you can stay overnight. ✉ *Piazza San Francesco* 📞  
0571/43051 🌐 [www.conventodisanfrancesco.it](http://www.conventodisanfrancesco.it) 🏠 *Free to visit; to stay overnight: €10 suggested donation, €35 for half-pension.*

## **Convento e Chiesa di Santi Jacopo e Lucia** (*Convent and Church of Sts. Jacob and Lucia*)

**PUBLIC ART** | The Convento e Chiesa di Santi Jacopo e Lucia is also oddly known as the church of San Domenico, which refers to the fact that the Dominicans took over the church in the 14th century. Most of the interior suffers from too much Baroque, but there is a lovely sculpted tomb by Bernardo Rossellino for Giovanni Chellini, a doctor who died in 1461. You'll find it on the right-hand nave close to the high altar. ✉ *Piazza del Popolo* ☎ 0571/43150.

## **Duomo**

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | San Miniato's Duomo, set in a lovely piazza, has a simple yet pretty 13th-century facade, which has been restored. It also has a lovely pulpit designed by Giovanni Duprè, which was executed by his daughter Amalia (1845–1928). The interior is largely uninteresting, though there's a poignant plaque commemorating the 55 citizens who were killed in this church in July 1944 by German occupying forces. ✉ *Piazza del Castello*.

## **Museo Diocesano**

**MUSEUM** | Although the Museo Diocesano is small, the modest collection incorporates a number of subtle and pleasant local works of art. Note the rather odd *Crucifixion* by Lorenzo Lippi, *Il Redentore*, probably by a follower of Verrochio (1435–88), and the small but exquisite *Education of the Virgin* by Tiepolo (1696–1770). ✉ *Piazza del Castello* ☎ 342 6860873 🎫 €3.

## **Torre di Federico II**

**BUILDING** | Dating from the time of Frederick II (1194–1250), the Torre di Federico II was destroyed during World War II. A point of civic pride for San Miniatans and visible for miles, the tower was rebuilt and reopened in 1958. The hapless, ill-fated Pier della Vigna, chancellor and minister to Frederick II, leaped to his death from the tower, earning a mention in Dante's *Inferno*. The hill on which the tower stands—a surprisingly large oval of green grass—is one of the loveliest places in the area to have a picnic, enjoy the 360-degree view, and perhaps join local children in a pickup game of *calcio* (soccer). ✉ *Piazza la Torre* ☎ 0571/42745 🎫 €4.

## r Restaurants

### Bar Cantini

\$ | ITALIAN | FAMILY | This social hub for San Miniato serves wonderful panini made with bread baked on-site. You can eat any of this seated at tables with a most splendid view of the valley below. **Known for:** lively, convivial atmosphere; good sandwiches at great prices; the view. [💰] *Average main: €10*  
✉ Via Conti 1 ☎ 0571/43030 🚫 No credit cards.

### Il Convio

\$\$ | TUSCAN | A short drive down a steep, serpentine road from San Miniato brings you to this rustic country *ristorante* with sponged walls, stenciled decorations, and checkered tablecloths. The main courses are mostly Tuscan classics, such as *bistecca fiorentina* (a generous cut of grilled steak). **Known for:** truffled specialties; tranquil country setting; the wine list. [💰] *Average main: €18* ✉ Via San Maiano 2 ☎ 0571/408113 🌐 [www.ristoranteilconvio.com](http://www.ristoranteilconvio.com) 🕒 Closed Wed.

### ★ Piazza del Popolo

\$\$ | ITALIAN | It bills itself as an “Enoteca con cucina” which means that it’s a wine (and coffee) bar that also happens to offer fantastic food at lunch and dinner. In the kitchen are Salvatore Vigliotti and Agnese Zingoue; Salvatore has cooked elsewhere in Europe and in Australia, and it shows. **Known for:** eclectic food with fantasy; fine wine list; outdoor seating when it’s warm. [💰] *Average main: €16* ✉ Piazza del Popolo 10 ☎ 0571/42548 🌐 [www.piazzadelpopolo.eu](http://www.piazzadelpopolo.eu) 🕒 Closed Wed.

## h Hotels

### Convento di San Francesco

\$ | B&B/INN | For a complete change of pace, you can stay in this 13th-century convent in the company of five Franciscan friars. **Pros:** great price; tranquility; no curfew (guests are given their own key). **Cons:** rooms are rather spartan; most of staff speaks only Italian; quite removed from the

historic center. 💰 Rooms from: €35 ✉ Piazza San Francesco ☎ 0571/43051,  
0571/43398 🌐 [www.conventodisanfrancesco.it](http://www.conventodisanfrancesco.it) 🚫 No credit cards 🛏 30  
rooms 🍽 No meals.

# Pisa

If you can get beyond the kitsch of the stalls hawking cheap souvenirs around the Leaning Tower, you'll find that Pisa has much to offer. Its treasures aren't as abundant as those of Florence, to which it is inevitably compared, but the cathedral-baptistery-tower complex of Piazza del Duomo, known collectively as the Campo dei Miracoli (Field of Miracles), is among the most dramatic settings in Italy.

Pisa may have been inhabited as early as the Bronze Age. It was certainly populated by the Etruscans and, in turn, became part of the Roman Empire. In the early Middle Ages it flourished as an economic powerhouse—along with Amalfi, Genoa, and Venice, it was one of the four maritime republics. The city's economic and political power ebbed in the early 15th century as it fell under Florence's domination, though it enjoyed a brief resurgence under Cosimo I in the mid-16th century. Pisa sustained heavy damage during World War II, but the Duomo and Tower were spared, along with some other grand Romanesque structures.

## GETTING HERE

Pisa is an easy hour's train ride from Florence. By car it's a straight shot on the Fi-Pi-Li autostrada. The Pisa–Lucca train runs frequently and takes about 30 minutes.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS Pisa Tourism Office.** ✉ *Piazza del Duomo* ☎ 050/550100 🌐 [www.turismo.pisa.it](http://www.turismo.pisa.it).

## S Sights

Pisa, like many Italian cities, is best explored on foot, and most of what you'll want to see is within walking distance. The views along the Arno River are particularly grand and shouldn't be missed—there's a feeling of spaciousness that isn't found along the Arno in Florence.

As you set out, note that there are various combination-ticket options for sights on the Piazza del Duomo.

### **Battistero**

**BUILDING** | This lovely Gothic baptistery, which stands across from the Duomo's facade, is best known for the pulpit carved by Nicola Pisano (circa 1220–84; father of Giovanni Pisano) in 1260. Every half hour, an employee will dramatically close the doors, then intone, thereby demonstrating how remarkable the acoustics are in the place. ✉ *Piazza del Duomo* 📞 050/835011 🌐 [www.opapisa.it](http://www.opapisa.it) 🎫 €5, discounts available if bought in combination with tickets for other monuments.

### **Camposanto**

**CEMETERY** | According to legend, the cemetery—a walled structure on the western side of the Piazza dei Miracoli—is filled with earth that returning Crusaders brought back from the Holy Land. Contained within are numerous frescoes, notably *The Drunkenness of Noah*, by Renaissance artist Benozzo Gozzoli (1422–97), and the disturbing *Triumph of Death* (14th century; artist uncertain), whose subject matter shows what was on people's minds in a century that saw the ravages of the Black Death. ✉ *Piazza del Duomo* 📞 050/835011 🌐 [www.opapisa.it](http://www.opapisa.it) 🎫 €5.

### **Duomo**

**BUILDING** | Pisa's cathedral brilliantly utilizes the horizontal marble-stripe motif (borrowed from Moorish architecture) that became common to Tuscan cathedrals. It is famous for the Romanesque panels on the transept door facing the tower that depict scenes from the life of Christ. The beautifully carved 14th-century pulpit is by Giovanni Pisano. ✉ *Piazza del Duomo* 📞 050/835011 🌐 [www.opapisa.it](http://www.opapisa.it) 🎫 €5.

### **La Certosa di Pisa**

**MUSEUM** | A *certosa* is a monastery whose monks belong to the strict Carthusian order. This vast and sprawling complex, begun in 1366, was suppressed by Napoléon in the early 1800s, and then again in 1866. Most of the art and architecture you see dates from the 17th and 18th centuries. The Carthusians returned here, only to leave it permanently in 1969. Also within

it is the **Museo di Storia Naturale e del Territorio**. This museum of natural history contains fossils, 24 whale skeletons that serve to trace the mammal's development over the millennia, and some exhibits of local minerals. Guided tours are given every hour and a half: unfortunately, there are given only in Italian. ✉ 10 km (6 miles) east of Pisa via road north of Arno, through Mezzana and then toward Calci and Montemagno ☎ 050/938430 📄 €5.

### ★ Leaning Tower (Torre Pendente)

**BUILDING** | Legend holds that Galileo conducted an experiment on the nature of gravity by dropping metal balls from the top of the 187-foot-high Leaning Tower of Pisa. Historians, however, say this legend has no basis in fact—which isn't quite to say that it's false. Work on this tower, built as a *campanile* (bell tower) for the Duomo, started in 1173: the lopsided settling began when construction reached the third story. The tower's architects attempted to compensate through such methods as making the remaining floors slightly taller on the leaning side, but the extra weight only made the problem worse. The settling continued, and by the late 20th century it had accelerated to such a point that many feared the tower would simply topple over, despite all efforts to prop it up. The structure has since been firmly anchored to the earth. The final phase to restore the tower to its original tilt of 300 years ago was launched in early 2000 and finished two years later. The last phase removed some 100 tons of earth from beneath the foundation. Reservations, which are essential, can be made online or by calling the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo; it's also possible to arrive at the ticket office and book for the same day. Note that children under eight years of age are not allowed to climb. ✉ Piazza del Duomo ☎ 050/835011 🌐 [www.opapisa.it](http://www.opapisa.it) 📄 €18.

### Museo delle Sinopie

**MUSEUM** | The well-arranged museum on the south side of the Piazza del Duomo holds the *sinopie* (preparatory drawings) for the Camposanto frescoes. Though the exhibits are mostly of interest to specialists, some didactic audiovisual material provides a good introduction to the whole religious complex. ✉ Piazza del Duomo ☎ 050/835011 🌐 [www.opapisa.it](http://www.opapisa.it) 📄 €5.

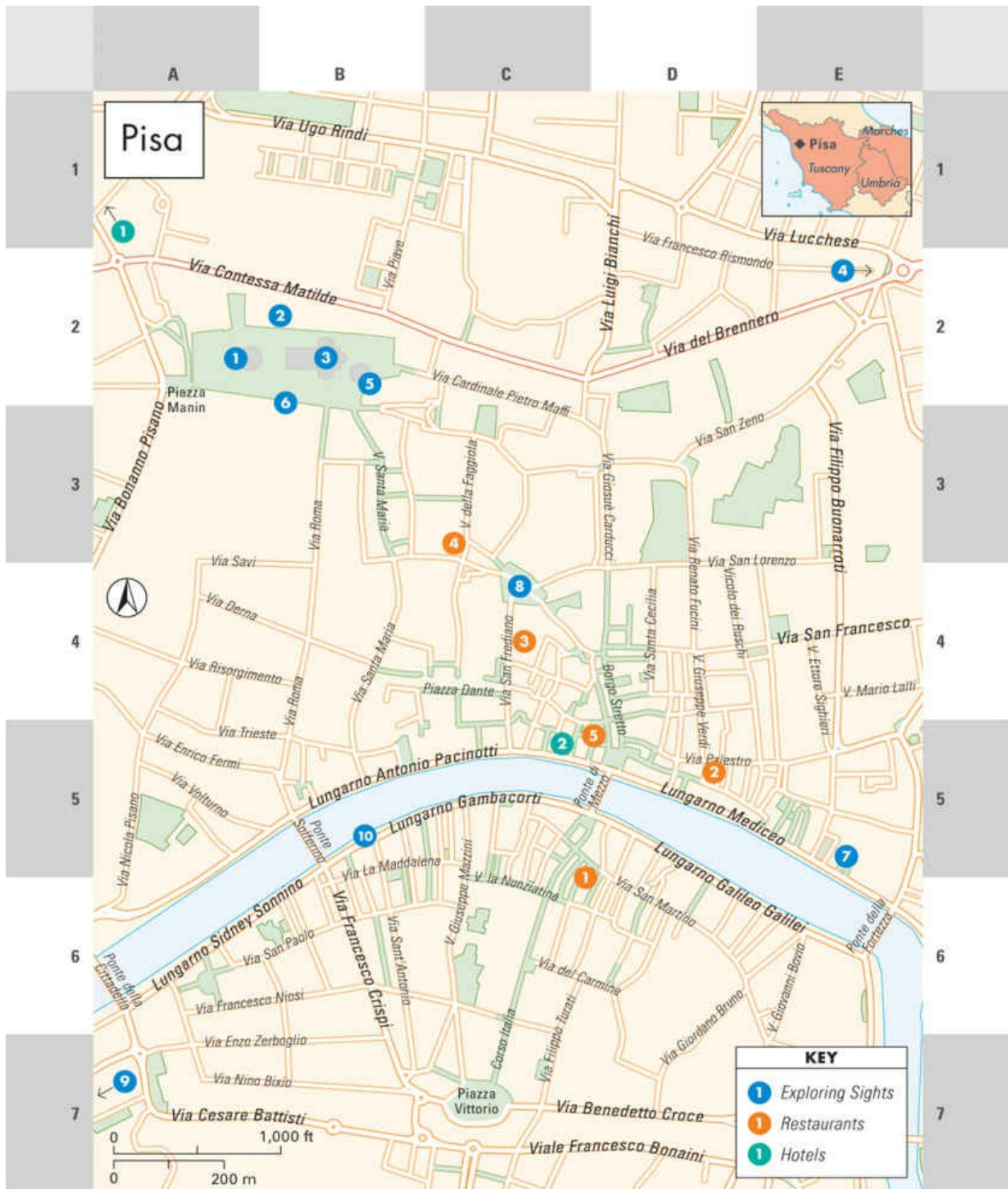
## Museo Nazionale di San Matteo

MUSEUM | On the north bank of the Arno, this museum contains some beautiful examples of local Romanesque and Gothic art. Here you'll find very few visitors, and stunning works by Donatello and Benozzo Gozzoli (among others). ✉ *Piazza Matteo in Soarta 1* ☎ 050/541865 🌐 [www.polomusealetoscana.beniculturali.it](http://www.polomusealetoscana.beniculturali.it) 📄 €5 🕒 Closed Mon.

## Piazza dei Cavalieri

CASTLE/PALACE | The piazza, with its fine Renaissance **Palazzo dei Cavalieri**, **Palazzo dell'Orologio**, and Chiesa di **Santo Stefano dei Cavalieri**, was laid out by Giorgio Vasari in about 1560. The square was the seat of the Ordine dei Cavalieri di San Stefano (Order of the Knights of St. Stephen), a military and religious institution meant to defend the coast from possible invasion by the Turks. Also in this square is the prestigious **Scuola Normale Superiore**, founded by Napoléon in 1810 on the French model. Here graduate students pursue doctorates in literature, philosophy, mathematics, and science. In front of the school is a large statue of Ferdinando I de' Medici dating from 1596. On the extreme left is the tower where the hapless Ugolino della Gherardesca (died 1289) was imprisoned with his two sons and two grandsons—legend holds that he ate them. Dante immortalized him in Canto XXXIII of his *Inferno*. Duck into the **Church of Santo Stefano** (if you're lucky enough to find it open) and check out Bronzino's splendid *Nativity of Christ* (1564–65). ✉ *Piazza dei Cavalieri*.





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2 Camposanto .....	B2	
3 Duomo .....	B2	
4 La Certosa di Pisa .....	E2	
5 Leaning Tower (Torre Pendante) .....	B2	
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1 Fattoria di Migliarino ...	A1
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## San Piero a Grado

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | This 11th-century basilica, located 8 km (5 miles) southwest of Pisa along the Arno, was built over the remains of two earlier churches. According to legend, it was here that St. Peter the Apostle stepped off the boat in AD 42—his first step on Italian soil. (It would have made more sense for him to land on the Adriatic Coast, as he was coming from Antioch.) The structure is a lovely example of Romanesque architecture, and it's not without its quirks: it has two apses, one at each end. On the walls are some crumbling, but still vibrant, frescoes dating from the 12th and 13th centuries. Thirty-one of these frescoes depict scenes from the lives of Saints Peter and Paul, an uncommon subject in Tuscan wall painting. ✉ *Via Vecchia di Marina, San Piero a* 📞 050/960065 🌐 [www.sanpieroagrado.it](http://www.sanpieroagrado.it) 🕒 Daily 9–4.

## Santa Maria della Spina

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | Originally an oratory dating from the 13th century, this gem of a church has been restored several times, most recently in 1996–98 (due to flood damage). It's a delicate, tiny church, and a fine example of Tuscan Gothic architecture. The church has recently been given a face-lift, and the results are grand. ✉ *Lungarno Gambacorti* 🆓 *Free.*

# r Restaurants

## ★ Beny

\$\$\$ | **TUSCAN** | Apricot walls hung with etchings of Pisa make this small, single-room restaurant warmly romantic. Husband and wife Damiano and Sandra Lazzerini have been running the place for two decades, and it shows in their obvious enthusiasm while talking about the menu (fish is a focus) and daily specials, which often astound. **Known for:** superb fish dishes; gracious service; terrific wine list. 💰 *Average main: €27* ✉ *Piazza Gambacorti 22* 📞 050/25067 🕒 *Closed Sun., and 2 wks in mid-Aug. No lunch Sat.*

## La Pergoletta

\$\$ | **TUSCAN** | **FAMILY** | On an old town street named for its beautiful towers, this small, simple restaurant is in one such tower itself. It's a place where

Pisans come to celebrate. **Known for:** creative, inventive menu; festive atmosphere; gracious waitstaff. [💰] *Average main: €17* [✉] *Via delle Belle Torri 40* [📞] *050/542458* [🌐] [www.ristorantelapergoletta.com](http://www.ristorantelapergoletta.com) [🕒] *Closed Mon., and 1 wk in Aug. No lunch Sat.*

### Osteria dei Cavalieri

\$\$ | ITALIAN | This charming white-wall restaurant, a few steps from Piazza dei Cavalieri, is reason enough to come to Pisa. They can do it all here—serve up exquisitely grilled fish dishes, please vegetarians, and prepare tagliata for meat lovers. **Known for:** land tasting menu; sea tasting menu; vegetable tasting menu. [💰] *Average main: €16* [✉] *Via San Frediano 16* [📞] *050/580858* [🌐] [www.osteriacavalieri.pisa.it](http://www.osteriacavalieri.pisa.it) [🕒] *Closed Sun., 2 wks in Aug., and Dec. 29–Jan. 7. No lunch Sat.*

### Trattoria la Faggiola

\$ | ITALIAN | It's only seconds away from the Leaning Tower, which probably explains the “No Pizza” sign written in big letters on the blackboard outside. Inside, another blackboard lists two or three primi and secondi: the problem is deciding, because everything's good, from the *pasta pasticciata con speck e carciofi* (oven-baked penne with cured ham and artichokes) to the finishing touch of *castagnaccio con crema di ricotta* (a chestnut flan topped with ricotta cream). **Known for:** great food at affordable prices; menu that changes daily; polite waitstaff. [💰] *Average main: €10* [✉] *Via della Faggiola 1* [📞] *050/556179* [🌐] [www.trattoriadellafaggiola.it](http://www.trattoriadellafaggiola.it) [💳] *No credit cards* [🕒] *Closed Tues.*

### ★ Vineria di Piazza

\$\$ | ITALIAN | It's set in a lively, historic market square and frequented by locals. The menu adheres to Tuscan tradition but also indulges in some flights of fantasy. **Known for:** inventive pasta dishes; baccalà (salt cod) served three different ways; charming, energetic staff. [💰] *Average main: €20* [✉] *Piazza delle Vettovaglie 13–15* [📞] *050/520784.*

## h Hotels

## ★ Fattoria di Migliarino

\$ | B&B/INN | FAMILY | Martino Salviati and his wife Giovanna have turned their working *fattoria* (farm)—on which they raise soybeans, corn, and sugar beets—into an inn with charming, spacious apartments that accommodate two to eight people and are rustically furnished, many of them with fireplaces. **Pros:** near Pisa airport, a good choice for a tranquil last night in Italy; quiet country living; the pool. **Cons:** mandatory one-week apartment stay during high season; not all rooms have air-conditioning; a car is a necessity. [🇺🇸] Rooms from: €110 [✉] Via dei Pini 289, 10 km (6 miles) northwest of Pisa, Migliarino [📞] 050/803046, 335/6608411 mobile [🌐] [www.fattoriadimigliarino.it](http://www.fattoriadimigliarino.it) [↔] 23 rooms [🍽️] Free breakfast.

## Royal Victoria

\$ | HOTEL | In a pleasant palazzo facing the Arno, a 10-minute walk from the Campo dei Miracoli, the hotel has room styles that range from the 1800s, complete with frescoes, to the 1920s; the most charming are in the old tower. **Pros:** friendly staff; lovely views of the Arno from many rooms; old-world charm. **Cons:** rooms vary significantly in size; rooms a little worn; eight rooms do not have private bath. [🇺🇸] Rooms from: €100 [✉] Lungarno Pacinotti 12 [📞] 050/940111 [🌐] [www.royalvictoria.it](http://www.royalvictoria.it) [↔] 48 rooms, 40 with bath [🍽️] Free breakfast.

# p Performing Arts

## Fondazione Teatro di Pisa

FESTIVALS | Pisa has a lively performing-arts scene, most of which happens at the 19th-century Teatro Verdi. Music and dance performances are presented from September through May. Contact Fondazione Teatro di Pisa for schedules and information. [✉] Via Palestro 40, Lungarni [📞] 050/941111 [🌐] [www.teatrodipisa.pi.it](http://www.teatrodipisa.pi.it).

## Luminaria

FESTIVALS | Pisa at its best during the Luminaria feast day, on June 16. The day honors St. Ranieri, the city's patron saint. Palaces along the Arno are lit

with white lights, and there are plenty of fireworks. ✉ *Pisa.*

# Prato

19 km (12 miles) northwest of Florence, 60 km (37 miles) east of Lucca.

The wool industry in this city, one of the world's largest producers of cloth, was famous throughout Europe as early as the 13th century. Business was further stimulated in the late 14th century by a local cloth merchant, Francesco di Marco Datini. One thing that distinguishes Prato from other Italian towns of its size is the presence of modern public art—most notably Henry Moore's enormous marble sculpture *Square Form with Cut* in Piazza San Marco. ■ **TIP** → **Most of Prato's major museums are closed Tuesday.**

## GETTING HERE

Prato is a quick train ride from Florence. By car it's a 45-minute trip on the A11/E76 toll road.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS Prato tourism office.** ✉ Piazza Buonamici 7 ☎ 0574/24112  
🌐 [www.pratoturismo.it](http://www.pratoturismo.it).

# S Sights

## Carmignano

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | Pontormo's *Visitation* is in this small village a short drive from Poggio a Caiano. The Franciscan church of **San Michele**, dedicated in 1211, houses the work. The painting dates 1527–30, and it may well be Pontormo's masterpiece. The luminous colors, flowing drapery, and steady gaze shared between the Virgin and St. Elizabeth are breathtaking. The church's small cloister, shaded by olive trees, is always open, and offers a quiet place to sit. ✉ 15 km (9 miles) south of Prato, through Poggio a Caiano, up Mt. Albano.

## Castello (Castle)

**CASTLE/PALACE** | The formidable Castello, near Santa Maria delle Carceri, is an impressive sight. The (Sicilian) Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II (1194–1250) built the seat of his authority in Tuscany in this somewhat unlikely spot. Frederick's castles were designed to echo imperial Rome, and the many columns, lions, and porticoes testify to his ambition. This is the only castle he built outside southern Italy (other examples may be found in Sicily and Puglia). ✉ *Piazza Santa Maria delle Carceri* ☎ 0574/38207 📬 Free 🕒 Closed Tues.

### **Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci** (*Luigi Pecci Center of Contemporary Art*)

**MUSEUM** | Prato's Center for Contemporary Art Luigi Pecci contains works of artists from around the world completed after 1965. The exhibitions constantly change, and often feature debut presentations. ✉ *Viale della Repubblica 277* ☎ 0574/531915 🌐 [www.centropecci.it](http://www.centropecci.it) 📬 €4.

### **Duomo**

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | Prato's Romanesque Duomo, reconstructed from 1211, is famous for its **Pergamo del Sacro Cingolo** (Chapel of the Holy Girdle), to the left of the entrance, which enshrines the sash of the Virgin Mary. It is said that the girdle was given to the apostle Thomas by the Virgin Mary when she miraculously appeared after her Assumption into heaven. The Duomo also contains 15th-century frescoes by Prato's most famous son, Fra Filippo Lippi. His scenes from the life of St. Stephen are on the left wall of the **Cappella Maggiore** (Main Chapel); those from the life of John the Baptist are on the right. ✉ *Piazza del Duomo* ☎ 0574/29339 🌐 [www.diocesiprato.it](http://www.diocesiprato.it) 📬 €5 to visit *Cappella Maggiore*.

### **Museo del Tessuto** (*Textile Museum*)

**MUSEUM** | Preserved in the Museo del Tessuto is what made this city a Renaissance economic powerhouse. The collection includes clothing, fabric fragments, and the machines used to make them, all dating from the 14th to the 20th century. Check out the 15th-century fabrics with pomegranate prints, a virtuoso display of Renaissance textile wizardry. The well-designed museum (objects are clearly labeled in English) is within the medieval walls of the city in the old Cimatoria, a 19th-century factory that finished raw fabrics. ✉ *Via Santa Chiara 24* ☎ 0574/611503 🌐 [www.museodeltessuto.it](http://www.museodeltessuto.it)

🎫 €7.

### Museo dell'Opera del Duomo

**MUSEUM** | A sculpture by Donatello (circa 1386–1466) that originally adorned the Duomo's exterior pulpit is now on display in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo. The museum also includes such 15th-century gems as Fra Filippo Lippi's *Madonna and Child*, Giovanni Bellini's (circa 1432–1516) *Christ on the Cross*, and Caravaggio's (1571–1610) *Christ Crowned with Thorns*. ✉ Piazza del Duomo 49 ☎ 0574/29339 🌐 [www.diocesiprato.it](http://www.diocesiprato.it) 🎫 €5 🕒 Closed Tues.

### Poggio a Caiano

**HOUSE** | For a look at gracious country living Renaissance style, take a detour to the Medici villa in Poggio a Caiano. Lorenzo “il Magnifico” (1449–92) commissioned Giuliano da Sangallo (circa 1445–1516) to redo the villa, which was lavished with frescoes by important Renaissance painters such as Pontormo (1494–1556), Franciabigio (1482–1525), and Andrea del Sarto (1486–1531). You can walk around the austere grounds while waiting for one of the hourly villa tours, which start on the half hour. The guides do not speak, but follow you around the place. ✉ Piazza dei Medici 14, 7 km (4½ miles) south of Prato (follow signs) ☎ 055/877012 🎫 Free 🕒 Closed 2d and 3rd Mon. of month.

### Santa Maria delle Carceri

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | The church of Santa Maria delle Carceri was built by Giuliano Sangallo in the 1490s, and is a landmark of Renaissance architecture. ✉ Piazza Santa Maria delle Carceri, off Via Cairoli and southeast of the cathedral ☎ 0574/39259 🌐 [www.diocesiprato.it](http://www.diocesiprato.it).

### Villa Medicea La Ferdinanda di Artimino

**HOUSE** | In the small town of **Artimino**, next door to Carmignano, is the Villa Medicea La Ferdinanda di Artimino. Built by Ferdinando I de' Medici (1549–1609) in the 1590s, it was originally used as a hunting lodge. Though it's closed to the public (except for special occasions or by prior arrangement), it's simply a stunning villa to look at. ✉ 11 km (7 miles) south of Prato (head east from Carmignano or south from Poggio a Caiano, up Mt.



Albano) ☎ 055/875141.

## 🍴 Restaurants

### ★ Antonio Mattei

\$ | ITALIAN | Prato's *biscotti* (literally “twice-cooked” cookies) have an extra-dense texture, lending themselves to submersion in your caffè or vin santo. The best biscotti in town are at Antonio Mattei. 💰 *Average main: €5* ✉ *Via Ricasoli 20/22* ☎ 0574/25756 🌐 [www.antoniomattei.it](http://www.antoniomattei.it) 🚫 *No credit cards.*

### ★ Baghino

\$\$ | TUSCAN | In the heart of the historic center, Baghino is the best restaurant in town. It's been serving since 1870, capably run by five generations of the Pacetti family (daughters Guja and Silvia are presently in charge). **Known for:** sedano ripieno (a Pratese specialty); filetto al pepe verde (beef fillet in a creamy peppercorn sauce); superb wine list. 💰 *Average main: €18* ✉ *Via dell'Accademia 9* ☎ 0574/27920 🕒 *Closed Aug. No lunch Mon. No dinner Sun.*

### ★ Da Delfina

\$\$ | TUSCAN | Delfina Cioni began cooking many years ago for hungry hunters in the town of Artimino, 20 km (12 miles) south of Prato. Dishes celebrate Tuscan food, with an emphasis on fresh local ingredients. **Known for:** delicious grilled meats cooked on a roaring fireplace; gorgeous view; fine wine list. 💰 *Average main: €17* ✉ *Via della Chiesa 1, Artimino* ☎ 055/8718074 🌐 [www.dadelfina.it](http://www.dadelfina.it) 🕒 *Closed Mon. No lunch Tues. No dinner Sun.*

### La Vecchia Cucina di Soldano

\$ | TUSCAN | This place could be mistaken for a grandmother's kitchen: it's completely unpretentious, with red-and-white-checked tablecloths and a waitstaff who treat you like an old friend. The restaurant teems with locals who appreciate fine dining at rock-bottom prices. **Known for:** Tuscan specialties; superb tagliolini sui fagioli; very reasonably priced. 💰 *Average main: €10* ✉ *Via Pomeria 23* ☎ 0574/34665 🌐 [www.trattoriasoldano.it](http://www.trattoriasoldano.it) 🚫 *No credit cards* 🕒 *Closed Sun.*

# h Hotels

## Hotel Paggeria Medicea

\$\$ | HOTEL | Ferdinando I de' Medici loved to hunt, and so erected his villa to accommodate this whim. **Pros:** peace and tranquillity; spectacular views; the welcoming pool. **Cons:** a car is essential; often hosts wedding parties; rooms could use an update. 💰 Rooms from: €174 ✉ Viale Papa Giovanni XXIII 1 ☎ 055/875141 🌐 [www.artimino.com](http://www.artimino.com) 🏠 37 rooms 🍴 No meals.

# Pistoia

*18 km (11 miles) northwest of Prato, 43 km (27 miles) east of Lucca, 37 km (23 miles) northwest of Florence.*

Founded in the 2nd century BC as a support post for Roman troops, Pistoia grew over the centuries into an important trading center. In the Middle Ages it was troubled by civic strife and eventually fell to the Florentines, who imposed a pro-Guelph government in 1267; it lost its last vestiges of independence to Florence in 1329.

Reconstructed after heavy bombing during World War II, it has preserved some fine Romanesque architecture. Modern-day Pistoia's major industries include the manufacture of rail vehicles (including the cars for Washington, D.C.'s Metro) and tree and plant nurseries, which flourish on the alluvial plain around the city.

## GETTING HERE

From Florence or Lucca, Pistoia is an easy train ride; trains run frequently. By car, take the A11/E76.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS Pistoia tourism office.** ✉ *Palazzo dei Vescovi* ☎ 0573/21622  
🌐 [www.pistoia.turismo.toscana.it](http://www.pistoia.turismo.toscana.it).

# S Sights

## Duomo

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | The Romanesque Duomo, the Cattedrale di San Zeno, dates from as early as the 5th century. It houses a magnificent silver altar dedicated to St. James. The two half-figures on the left are by Filippo Brunelleschi (1377–1446), the first Renaissance architect (and designer of Florence's magnificent Duomo cupola). ✉ *Piazza del Duomo* ☎ 0573/25095 📄 *Free; access to altarpiece €2.*

## Fondazione Marino Marini

**MUSEUM** | Lest you think that Tuscany produced only Renaissance artists, the Fondazione Marino Marini presents many works from its namesake modern native Pistoian (1901–80). Sculpture, etchings, paintings, engravings, and mixed media have all been installed in the elegantly renovated 14th-century Convento del Tau. ✉ *Corso Silvano Fedi 30* ☎ *0573/30285, 0573/31332* 🌐 [www.fondazionemarinomarini.it](http://www.fondazionemarinomarini.it) 🏠 *From €4* 🕒 *Closed Mon. Closed Sun. morning.*

## Giardino Zoologico

**ZOO** | **FAMILY** | A 20-minute drive out of town brings you to the Giardino Zoologico, a small zoo laid out to accommodate the wiles of both animals and children. ✉ *Via Pieve a Celle 160/a, take Bus 29 from train station* ☎ *0573/911219* 🌐 [www.zoodipistoia.it](http://www.zoodipistoia.it) 🏠 *€15.*

## Musei dell'Antico Palazzo dei Vescovi (Old Bishop's Palace)

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE** | At the end of the 11th century, the bishop of Pistoia began construction on this palace. One thousand years later, it houses several collections including the **Museo della Cattedrale di San Zeno**, which contains spectacular treasures from Pistoia's cathedral—including ornate pieces in gold, rings with jewels the size of small eggs, and solemn, powerful statuary. Below, however, is the **Percorso Archeologico**—Roman, medieval, and Etruscan archaeological sites uncovered during a 1970s renovation. The warren of corridors and caves below and the plain, spare rooms above both show off their treasures with simple elegance. Also in the complex is the **Museo Tattile**, which allows visitors to touch various local buildings built to scale. A guide accompanies you while you wander, and wandering days and times are limited. ✉ *Piazza del Duomo* ☎ *0573/369272* 🏠 *€5.*

## Museo Civico

**CASTLE/PALACE** | The Palazzo del Comune, begun around 1295, houses the Museo Civico, containing works by local artists from the 13th to 19th century. ✉ *Piazza del Duomo 1* ☎ *0573/371296* 🌐 [www.musei.comune.pistoia.it](http://www.musei.comune.pistoia.it) 🏠 *From €4.*

## Ospedale del Ceppo

**HOSPITAL—SIGHT** | Founded in the 13th century and still a functioning hospital, the Ospedale del Ceppo has a facade with a superb early-16th-century exterior terracotta frieze. It was begun by Giovanni della Robbia (1469–1529) and completed by the workshop of Santi and Benedetto Buglioni between 1526 and 1528. Don't miss the 17th-century graffiti on the columns outside. ✉ *Piazza Giovanni XIII, down Via Pacini from Piazza del Duomo.*

### Palazzo Rospigliosi

**CASTLE/PALACE** | The 16th-century mannerist-style Palazzo Rospigliosi houses the **Museo Rospigliosi** and the **Museo Diocesano**, with a collection of mostly 16th- and 17th-century works. The Museo Rospigliosi contains a room referred to as Pope Clement IX's (1600–69) apartment, although there's no evidence that the Pistoian native, born Giulio Rospigliosi, actually stayed there. The Museo Diocesano has liturgical objects and furnishings from the diocese of Pistoia. Many date from the 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries. ✉ *Via Ripa del Sale 3* ☎ *0573/28740* 🌐 *[www.diocesipistoia.it](http://www.diocesipistoia.it)* 🏠 *From €4* ⌵ *Closed Mon.*

### San Giovanni Fuorcivitas

**PUBLIC ART** | An architectural gem in green-and-white marble, the medieval church of San Giovanni Fuorcivitas holds a *Visitation* by Luca della Robbia (1400–82), a painting attributed to Taddeo Gaddi, and a holy-water font that may have been made by Fra Guglielmo around 1270. ✉ *Via Cavour* ☎ *0573/24784.*

### Sant'Andrea

**PUBLIC ART** | In the 12th-century church of Sant'Andrea, the fine pulpit by Giovanni Pisano (circa 1250–1314) depicts scenes from the life of Christ in a series of high-relief, richly sculpted marble panels. ✉ *Piazzetta Sant'Andrea, Via Sant'Andrea* ☎ *0573/21912.*

## r Restaurants

### La BotteGaia

\$ | **WINE BAR** | Jazz plays softly in the background as patrons sip wine at rustic tables in rooms with exposed brick-and-stone walls. In warm weather you can also dine alfresco with a splendid view of the Piazza del Duomo. **Known for:** a menu which dares to be different; fine wine list; splendid desserts. [ \$ ] Average main: €13 [ ✉ ] Via del Lastrone 17 [ 📞 ] 0573/365602 [ 🌐 ] [www.labottegaia.it](http://www.labottegaia.it) [ 🕒 ] Closed Mon.

### **MagnoGaudio**

\$ | **ITALIAN** | It bills itself as a *caffetteria/ristorante*, which means it opens at 7 in the morning for coffee, serves lunch and dinner, and then closes well after dinner is over. Warm-color, sponged walls and simple wooden tables and chairs provide the backdrop for some tasty fare. **Known for:** fish dishes; satisfying lasagna; local wine list. [ \$ ] Average main: €11 [ ✉ ] Via Curtatone e Montanara 12 [ 📞 ] 0573/26905.

## **p Performing Arts**

### **La Giostra dell'Orso** (*Bear Joust*)

**FESTIVALS** | **FAMILY** | On July 25, La Giostra dell'Orso celebrates St. James, Pistoia's patron saint. During the staged event three knights from each section of the city fight a "bear" (actually a target shaped like a bear that they strike, on horseback). The visitor center has more information on the event. [ ✉ ] *Pistoia*.

### **Pistoia Blues**

**FESTIVALS** | In mid-July Pistoia Blues brings international blues artists and rock-and-rollers to town for performances in the main square. [ ✉ ] *Pistoia* [ 📞 ] 0573/994659 [ 🌐 ] [www.pistoiblues.com](http://www.pistoiblues.com).

# Montecatini Terme

15 km (9 miles) west of Pistoia, 49 km (30 miles) west of Florence, 29 km (18 miles) northeast of Lucca.

Immortalized in Fellini's film *8½*, Montecatini Terme is one of Italy's premier *terme* (spas). Known for their curative powers—and, at least once upon a time, for their great popularity among the wealthy—the mineral springs flow from five sources and are taken for a variety of ailments, including liver and skin disorders. Those “taking the cure” report each morning to one of the town's *stabilimenti termali* (thermal establishments) to drink their prescribed cupful of water. Afterward, guests can enjoy a leisurely breakfast, read the newspaper, recline and listen to music, or walk in the parks that surround these grand old spas.

Montecatini Terme's wealth of Art Nouveau buildings dates to the town's most active period of development at the beginning of the 20th century. Like most other well-heeled resort towns, Montecatini attracts the leisure traveler, conventioner, and senior citizen on a group tour; it's trimmed with a measure of neon and glitz; aside from taking the waters and people-watching in Piazza del Popolo, there's not a whole lot to do here, but it is a good base from which to explore the region.

## GETTING HERE

Montecatini Terme is one of the stops on the Florence–Lucca train line, and getting to the centro storico is an easy walk from the station. The A11/E76 will get you here by car.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS Montecatini Terme tourism office.** ✉ Viale Verdi 66–68 ☎ 0572/772244 🌐 [www.provincia.pistoia.it](http://www.provincia.pistoia.it). **Terme di Montecatini.** ✉ Viale Verdi 43 ☎ 0572/7781 🌐 [www.termemontecatini.it](http://www.termemontecatini.it).

## S Sights

## Montecatini Alto

**NEIGHBORHOOD** | The older town, Montecatini Alto, sits atop a hill nearby, and is reached by a funicular from Viale Diaz. Though there isn't much to do once you get up there, the medieval square is lined with restaurants and bars, the air is crisp, and the views of the Nievole, the valley below, are gorgeous. ☒ *Montecatini Terme.*

## Piazza del Popolo

**PLAZA** | The town's main square teems with cafés and bars. It's an excellent spot for people-watching; in the evening and on weekends it seems like everyone is out walking, seeing, and being seen. ☒ *Montecatini Terme.*

## Terme Tettuccio

**BUILDING** | The most attractive Art Nouveau structure in town, Terme Tettuccio, has lovely colonnades. Here fountains set up on marble counters dispense mineral water, bucolic scenes painted on tiles decorate walls, and an orchestra plays under a frescoed dome. ☒ *Viale Verdi 71* ☎ *0572/778501* 🌐 [www.termemontecatini.it](http://www.termemontecatini.it) 🗳️ *€15 to take the waters.*

# r Restaurants

## ★ Bargilli

**\$** | **ITALIAN** | *Cialde*, a local specialty, are circular wafers made with flour, sugar, eggs, and almonds from Puglia. The Bargilli family has been serving them with their equally delicious ice cream since 1936. **Known for:** arguably the best gelateria in town. 💰 *Average main: €10* ☒ *Viale Grocco 2* ☎ *0572/79459* 🌐 [www.cialdedimontecatini.it](http://www.cialdedimontecatini.it) 🚫 *No credit cards.*

# h Hotels

## Grand Hotel Croce di Malta

**\$\$** | **HOTEL** | This 1911 hotel is a short walk on tree-lined streets from the center of town and even closer to the thermal baths. **Pros:** spacious rooms; many rooms have deep bathtubs with water jets; in-house spa. **Cons:** attracts



many tour groups; service can be inconsistent; somewhat removed from the main drag. 💰 Rooms from: €150 ✉ Viale IV Novembre 18 ☎ 0572/9201, 0572/767516 🌐 [www.crocedimalta.com](http://www.crocedimalta.com) 🏠 136 rooms 🍳 Free breakfast.

# Lucca

Ramparts built in the 16th and 17th centuries enclose a charming fortress town filled with churches (99 of them), terracotta-roofed buildings, and narrow cobblestone streets, along which locals maneuver bikes to do their daily shopping. Here Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus agreed to rule Rome as a triumvirate in 56 BC; Lucca was later the first Tuscan town to accept Christianity. The town still has a mind of its own, and when most of Tuscany was voting communist as a matter of course, Lucca's citizens rarely followed suit. The famous composer Giacomo Puccini (1858–1924) was born here; he is celebrated during the summer Opera Theater and Music Festival of Lucca. The ramparts circling the centro storico are the perfect place to stroll, bicycle, or just admire the view.

## GETTING HERE

You can reach Lucca easily by train from Florence; the historic center is a short walk from the station. If you're driving, take the A11/E76.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS Lucca Tourism Office.** ✉ *Piazzale Verdi* ☎ *0583/583150* 🌐 [www.luccaturismo.it](http://www.luccaturismo.it).

## S Sights

Traffic (including motorbikes) is restricted in the walled historic center of Lucca. Walking is the most enjoyable way to get around. Biking here is also recommended, as the center is quite flat.

### **Casa Natale di Giacomo Puccini**

**HOUSE** | Lucca's most famous musical son was born in this house. It includes the piano on which Puccini composed *Turandot*, scores of important early compositions, letters, costumes and costume sketches, and family portraits. ✉ *Corte San Lorenzo 9, Via di Poggio* ☎ *0583/584028* 🌐

[www.puccinimuseum.it](http://www.puccinimuseum.it) 📞 €7.

## Duomo

**BUILDING** | The blind arches on the cathedral's facade are a fine example of the rigorously ordered Pisan Romanesque style, in this case happily enlivened by an extremely varied collection of small, carved columns. Take a closer look at the decoration of the facade and that of the portico below; they make this one of the most entertaining church exteriors in Tuscany. The Gothic interior contains a moving Byzantine crucifix—called the Volto Santo, or Holy Face—brought here, according to legend, in the 8th century (though it probably dates from between the 11th and early 13th century). The masterpiece of the Sienese sculptor Jacopo della Quercia (circa 1371–1438) is the marble *Tomb of Ilaria del Carretto* (1407–08). ✉ *Piazza San Martino* 📞 0583/490530 🌐 [www.museocattedralelucca.it](http://www.museocattedralelucca.it) 📞 €3.

## Museo della Cattedrale

**MUSEUM** | The cathedral museum exhibits many items too precious to be in the church, most notably the finely worked golden decorations of the Volto Santo, the Byzantine crucifix that remains in the Duomo. ✉ *Piazza Antelminelli* 📞 0583/490530 🌐 [www.museocattedralelucca.it](http://www.museocattedralelucca.it) 📞 From €4.

## Museo Nazionale di Palazzo Mansi

**MUSEUM** | Highlights here include the lovely *Portrait of a Youth* by Pontormo; portraits of the Medici painted by Bronzino (1503–72); and paintings by Tintoretto, Vasari, and others. ✉ *Palazzo Mansi, Via Galli Tassi 43, near west walls of old city* 📞 0583/55570 🌐 [www.polomusealetoscana.beniculturali.it](http://www.polomusealetoscana.beniculturali.it) 📞 From €4 🕒 Closed Mon.

## Museo Nazionale di Villa Guinigi

**MUSEUM** | On the eastern end of the historic center, this sadly overlooked museum has an extensive collection of local Etruscan, Roman, Romanesque, and Renaissance art. The museum represents an overview of Lucca's artistic traditions from Etruscan times until the 17th century, housed in the 15th-century former villa of the Guinigi family. ✉ *Via della Quarquonia 4* 📞 0583/496033 🌐 [www.polomusealetoscana.beniculturali.it](http://www.polomusealetoscana.beniculturali.it) 📞 €4 🕒 Closed Sun. and Mon.

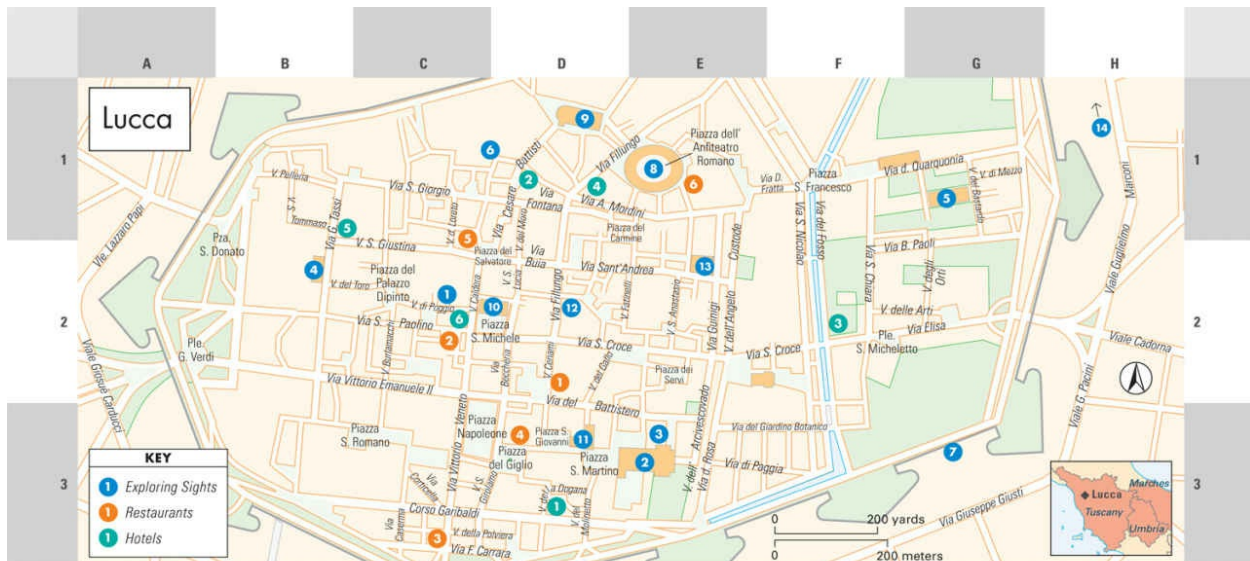
## Palazzo Pfanner

**CASTLE/PALACE** | Here you can rest your feet and let time pass, surrounded by a harmonious arrangement of sun, shade, blooming plants, water, and mysterious statuary. The palazzo's well-kept formal garden, which abuts the city walls, centers on a large fountain and pool. Allegorical statues line pebbled paths that radiate outward. The palazzo, built in the 17th century, was purchased in the 19th century by the Pfanners, a family of Swiss brewers. The family, which eventually gave the town a mayor, still lives here.

✉ *Via degli Asili 33* ☎ 0583/954029 🌐 [www.palazzopfanner.it](http://www.palazzopfanner.it) 🏠 From €5  
🕒 Closed Dec.–Mar.

## ★ Passeggiata delle Mura

**CITY PARK** | **FAMILY** | Any time of day when the weather is nice, you can find the citizens of Lucca cycling, jogging, strolling, or kicking a soccer ball in this green, beautiful, and very large linear park—neither inside nor outside the city but rather right atop and around the ring of ramparts that defines Lucca. Sunlight streams through two rows of tall plane trees to dapple the *passeggiata delle mura* (walk on the walls), which is 4.2 km (2½ miles) in length. Ten bulwarks are topped with lawns, many with picnic tables and some with play equipment for children. Be aware at all times of where the edge is—there are no railings, and the drop to the ground outside the city is a precipitous 40 feet. ✉ *Lucca* 🌐 [www.lemuradilucca.it](http://www.lemuradilucca.it).



Sights	Restaurants	Hotels
1 Casa Natale di Giotto Puccini .....C2	1 Blend .....D2	1 Albergo San Martino .....D3
2 Duomo .....E3	2 Buca di Sant'Antonio .....C2	2 Alla Corte degli Angeli .....D1
3 Museo della Cattedrale .....E3	3 Galateria Veneta .....C3	3 Hotel Ilaria .....F2
4 Museo Nazionale Di Palazzo Mansi .....B2	4 Il Giglio .....D3	4 La Luna .....D1
5 Museo Nazionale di Villa Guinigi .....G1	5 Trattoria da Leo .....C1	5 Palazzo Alexander .....B1
6 Palazzo Pfanner .....D1	6 Trattoria da Ubaldo .....E1	6 Piccolo Hotel Puccini .....C2
7 Passeggiata delle Mura .....G3		
8 Piazza dell'Anfiteatro Romano .....E1		
9 San Frediano .....D1		
10 San Michele in Foro .....D2		
11 Ss. Giovanni e Reperata .....D3		
12 Torre delle Ore .....D2		
13 Torre Guinigi .....E2		
14 Villa Reale .....H1		

## Piazza dell'Anfiteatro Romano

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE | FAMILY | Here's where the ancient Roman amphitheater once stood; some of the medieval buildings built over the amphitheater retain its original oval shape and brick arches. ✉ *Piazza Anfiteatro*.

## San Frediano

RELIGIOUS SITE | A 14th-century mosaic decorates the facade of this church just steps from the Anfiteatro. Inside are works by Jacopo della Quercia (circa 1371–1438) and Matteo Civitali (1436–1501), as well as the lace-clad mummy of St. Zita (circa 1218–78), the patron saint of household servants. They charge an admission price of 3€. ✉ *Piazza San Frediano* ☎ *No phone*.

## San Michele in Foro

RELIGIOUS SITE | The facade here is even more fanciful than that of the Duomo. Its upper levels have nothing but air behind them (after the front of the church was built, there were no funds to raise the nave), and the winged Archangel Michael, who stands at the very top, seems precariously poised for flight. The facade, heavily restored in the 19th century, displays busts of such 19th-century Italian patriots as Garibaldi and Cavour. Check out the superb

Filippino Lippi (1457/58–1504) panel painting of Saints Jerome, Sebastian, Rocco, and Helen in the right transept. ✉ *Piazza San Michele*.

### **Ss. Giovanni e Reparata**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE** | The unusual element at this church is an archaeological site, discovered in 1969, where five layers of Luccan history were uncovered. As you walk the paths and catwalks suspended above the delicate sites in the grottoes under the church, you move from one era to another—from the 2nd-century-BC site of a Roman temple through the 5th, 8th, 9th, and 11th centuries. After leaving the underground sights, the 12th-century church feels almost modern. ✉ *Piazza San Giovanni* ☎ 0583/490530 🌐 [www.museocattedralelucca.it](http://www.museocattedralelucca.it) 🏠 From €4.

### **Torre delle Ore** (*Tower of the Hours*)

**BUILDING** | **FAMILY** | The highest spot in Lucca is the top of this tower, which had its first mechanical clock in 1390. It's since contained several clocks over the centuries; the current timepiece was installed in 1754. The reward for climbing 207 steps to the top is a panoramic view of the town. ✉ *Via Fillungo at Via dell'Arancio* ☎ 0583/316846 🏠 €4.

### **Torre Guinigi**

**BUILDING** | **FAMILY** | The tower of the medieval Palazzo Guinigi contains one of the city's most curious sights: a grove of ilex trees has grown at the top of the tower, and their roots have pushed their way into the room below. From the top you have a magnificent view of the city and the surrounding countryside. (Only the tower is open to the public, not the palazzo.) ✉ *Via Sant'Andrea* ☎ 0583/48090 🏠 €4.

### **Villa Reale**

**GARDEN** | Eight kilometers (5 miles) north of Lucca in Marlia, this villa was once the home of Napoléon's sister, Princess Elisa. Restored by the Counts Pecci-Blunt, the estate is celebrated for its spectacular gardens, laid out in the 16th century and redone in the middle of the 17th. Gardening buffs adore the legendary *teatro di verdura*, a theater carved out of hedges and topiaries; concerts are occasionally held here. During the summer, concerts are held in the gardens of other famous Lucca villas as well. Contact the Lucca tourist

office (☎ 0583/91991) for details. ✉ North of Lucca along river Serchio, in direction of Barga and Bagni di Lucca, Marlia ☎ 0583/30108 🌐 [www.parcovillareale.it](http://www.parcovillareale.it) 📄 €9 🕒 Closed Nov.–Feb.

## r Restaurants

### Blend

\$ | ITALIAN | Blend is open 10 am to 10 pm (after most places are closed) and serves sandwiches, pasta, and creative salads. It's on a quiet little piazza right around the corner from the Duomo. **Known for:** creative sandwiches; vegetarians and vegans will be happy; happy hour with tasty snacks. (\$) *Average main: €10* ✉ *Piazza San Giusto 8* ☎ 0583/050442.

### ★ Buca di Sant'Antonio

\$\$ | TUSCAN | The staying power of Buca di Sant'Antonio—it's been around since 1782—is the result of superlative Tuscan food brought to the table by waitstaff who don't miss a beat. The menu includes the simple but blissful *tortelli lucchesi al sugo* (meat-stuffed pasta with a tomato-and-meat sauce), and more daring dishes such as roast *capretto* (kid) with herbs. **Known for:** superlative pastas; excellent sommelier; classy, family-run ambience. (\$) *Average main: €20* ✉ *Via della Cervia 3* ☎ 0583/55881 🌐 [www.bucadisantantonio.com](http://www.bucadisantantonio.com) 🕒 Closed Mon., 1 wk in Jan., and 1 wk in July. *No dinner Sun.*

### ★ Gelateria Veneta

\$ | ITALIAN | FAMILY | This place makes outstanding gelato, sorbet, and ices (some sugar-free). They prepare their confections three times a day, using the same recipes with which the Brothers Arnaldo opened the place in 1927. **Known for:** longtime institution and a favorite with locals; sorbet-stuffed frozen fruits; delicious ices on a stick. (\$) *Average main: €3* ✉ *Via V. Veneto 74* ☎ 0583/467037 🌐 [www.gelateriaveneta.net](http://www.gelateriaveneta.net) 🕒 Closed Nov.–Mar.

### ★ Il Giglio

\$\$ | TUSCAN | Cutting-edge divine food (along with Tuscan classics) are served in this one-room space; the roaring fireplace dominates. In the summer, there's seating outdoors on a pretty little piazza. **Known for:**

creative menu and ingredients; fine service; the wine list, especially its selection of local wines. [💰] *Average main: €21* [✉] *Piazza del Giglio 2* [📞] *0583/494508* [🌐] [www.ristorantegiglio.com](http://www.ristorantegiglio.com) [🕒] *Closed Wed., and 15 days in Nov. No dinner Tues.*

### Trattoria da Leo

[💰] | ITALIAN | A few short turns away from the facade of San Michele, this noisy, informal, traditional trattoria delivers *cucina alla casalinga* (home cooking) in the best sense. Try the typical *minestra di farro* (a hearty soup made with farro) to start or just go straight to *secondi piatti* (entrées); in addition to the usual roast meats, there's excellent chicken with olives and a good cold dish of boiled meats served with a sauce of parsley and pine nuts. **Known for:** lively local color; chestnut gelato. [💰] *Average main: €9* [✉] *Via Tegrimi 1, at corner of Via degli Asili* [📞] *0583/492236* [🚫] *No credit cards* [🕒] *No lunch Sun. Closed Sun. Nov.–Mar.*

### Trattoria da Ubaldo

[💰] | ITALIAN | The macabre decor is not for the faint of heart; but any lover of seriously good food can look beyond the disembodied dolls (among other things) adorning the dining room's walls. The menu is strong on local dishes, served in generous portions. **Known for:** grilled meats; copious portions of pasta; fine, well-priced wine list. [💰] *Average main: €13* [✉] *Via dell'Anfiteatro 67* [📞] *347/5004848.*

## h Hotels

### ★ Albergo San Martino

[💰] | B&B/INN | FAMILY | The brocade bedspreads of this inn in the heart of the centro storico are fresh and crisp, the proprietor friendly, the breakfast, served in a cheerful apricot room, more than ample. **Pros:** comfortable beds; great breakfast, including homemade cakes and pastries; friendly staff. **Cons:** parking is difficult; surroundings are pleasant and stylish though not luxurious; slightly noisy during Lucca Music Festival. [💰] *Rooms from: €90* [✉] *Via della Dogana 9* [📞] *0583/469181* [🌐] [www.albergosanmartino.it](http://www.albergosanmartino.it) [🚗] *16 rooms* [🕒] *Free breakfast.*



## Alla Corte degli Angeli

\$\$ | B&B/INN | This charming hotel with a friendly staff is right off the main shopping drag, Via Fillungo. **Pros:** many rooms are connecting, making them good for families. **Cons:** some rooms have tubs but no showers. [🇺🇸] Rooms from: €169 ✉ Via degli Angeli 23 ☎ 0583/469204, 0583/991989 🌐 [www.allacortedegliangeli.it](http://www.allacortedegliangeli.it) ↗ 12 rooms 🗳️ Free breakfast.

## Hotel Ilaria

\$\$ | HOTEL | The former stables of the Villa Bottini have been transformed into a modern hotel with stylish rooms done in a warm wood veneer with blue-and-white fittings. **Pros:** modern; free bicycles; multilingual, pleasant staff. **Cons:** though in the city center, it's a little removed from main attractions; some find it overpriced; books up quickly. [🇺🇸] Rooms from: €161 ✉ Via del Fosso 26 ☎ 0583/47615 🌐 [www.hotelilaria.com](http://www.hotelilaria.com) ↗ 41 rooms 🗳️ Free breakfast.

## La Luna

\$\$ | B&B/INN | On a quiet, airy courtyard close to the Piazza del Mercato, this hotel, run by the Barbieri family for more than four decades, occupies two renovated wings of an old building. **Pros:** professional staff; the annex has wheelchair-accessible rooms; central location. **Cons:** some rooms feel dated; street noise can be a bit of a problem. [🇺🇸] Rooms from: €180 ✉ Corte Compagni 12, at Via Fillungo ☎ 0583/493634, 0583/490021 🌐 [www.hotellaluna.it](http://www.hotellaluna.it) 🕒 Closed Jan. 7–31 ↗ 29 rooms 🗳️ Free breakfast.

## Palazzo Alexander

\$\$ | HOTEL | The building, dating from the 12th century, has been restructured to create the ease common to Lucchesi nobility: timbered ceilings, warm yellow walls, and brocaded chairs adorn the public rooms, and guest rooms have high ceilings and that same glorious damask. **Pros:** intimate feel; gracious staff; a short walk from San Michele in Foro. **Cons:** some complain of too-thin walls; books up quickly; might be too quiet for some. [🇺🇸] Rooms from: €150 ✉ Via S. Giustina 48 ☎ 0583/583571 🌐 [www.hotelpalazzoalexander.it](http://www.hotelpalazzoalexander.it) ↗ 13 rooms 🗳️ Free breakfast.

## Piccolo Hotel Puccini

\$ | **HOTEL** | Steps away from the busy square and church of San Michele, this little hotel is quiet, calm, and affordable and a great deal: wallpaper, hardwood floors, and throw rugs are among the handsome decorations. **Pros:** cheery, English-speaking staff; good value; quiet, central location. **Cons:** books up quickly; some rooms are on the dark side; many wish the breakfast was more copious. 💰 Rooms from: €95 ✉ Via di Poggio 9 ☎ 0583/55421 🌐 [www.hotelpuccini.com](http://www.hotelpuccini.com) ➡ 14 rooms 🗳 Free breakfast.

## 🎭 Performing Arts

### **Estate Musicale Lucchese**

**FESTIVALS** | Throughout the summer there are jazz, pop, and rock concerts in conjunction with the Estate Musicale Lucchese music festival. It happens in the large, beautiful Piazza Napoleone. ✉ *Lucca*.

### **Lucca Comics and Games**

**FESTIVALS** | During the first weekend of November, the city's piazzas are filled with tents featuring exhibitions and games, and the streets are invaded with comic-book fans and gamers for Lucca Comics and Games. During the last week of October, and continuing through the Comics festival, a *mostra mercato* (market show) takes place as well. ✉ *Lucca* ☎ 0583/401711 🌐 [www.luccacomicsandgames.com](http://www.luccacomicsandgames.com).

### **Lucca Tourist Office**

**FESTIVALS** | Schedule and ticket information for many local events, including the Opera Theater and Estate Musicale Lucchese festivals, are available at the Lucca Tourist Office. ✉ Piazza Santa Maria 35, San Michele ☎ 0583/91991 🌐 [www.luccaturismo.it](http://www.luccaturismo.it).

### **Opera Theater and Music Festival of Lucca**

**FESTIVALS** | Sponsored by the Opera Theater of Lucca and the music college of the University of Cincinnati, the Opera Theater and Music Festival of Lucca runs from mid-June to mid-July; performances are staged in open-air venues. Call the Lucca tourist office or the Opera Theater of Lucca (0583/46531) for information. ✉ *Lucca*.

## Teatro del Giglio

**THEATER** | From September through April you can see operas, plays, and concerts staged at the Teatro del Giglio. ✉ *Piazza del Giglio, Duomo* 📞 0583/46531 🌐 [www.teatrodelgiglio.it](http://www.teatrodelgiglio.it).

## a Activities

A good way to spend the afternoon is to go biking around the large path atop the city's ramparts. There are two good spots right next to each other where you can rent bikes. The prices are about the same (about €15 for the day and €3 per hour for city bikes) and they are centrally located, just beside the town wall.

### Berutto Nedo

**BICYCLING** | The vendors at Berutto Nedo, who sell bikes near the Piazza dell'Anfiteatro, are friendly and speak English. ✉ *Via dei Gaspari Alcide 83/a, Anfiteatro* 📞 0583/513728 🌐 [www.beruttonedo.com](http://www.beruttonedo.com).

### Poli Antonio Biciclette

**BICYCLING** | This is the best option for bicycle rental on the east side of town. ✉ *Piazza Santa Maria 42, Lucca East* 📞 0583/493787 🌐 [www.biciclettepoli.com](http://www.biciclettepoli.com).

## b Shopping

### CLOTHING

#### Benetton Stock Outlet

**CLOTHING** | Bargain hunters won't want to miss Benetton Stock Outlet, with its brightly colored garments at reduced prices. ✉ *via Santa Croce 23, Anfiteatro* 📞 0583/48445.

#### Mode Mignon Donna

**CLOTHING** | Come here for one-stop high-end designer shopping, including Prada, Miu-Miu, Gucci, Dolce e Gabbana, Jil Sander, and Tod's—among

others. (Modo Mignon Uomo is at another location in the center.) ✉ *Piazza Bernardini 1-2-3* ☎ 0583/492906 🌐 [www.modemignon.it](http://www.modemignon.it).

## FOOD

Lucca is known for its farro, an ancient barleylike grain that has found its way into regional specialties such as *zuppa* (or *minestra*) *di farro* (farro soup). It's available in food shops all over the city. Lucca is most famous for its olive oil, however, which is exported throughout the world. Look for extra-virgin oil whose label clearly indicates that it is entirely from Tuscany or, better yet, entirely from a local *fattoria*, or farm. *Olio nuovo* (new oil) is available for a few weeks in November, when the olive-picking season begins. This new oil is strong-flavored and peppery—great for drizzling on soup, pasta, and bread—and it's also nearly impossible to find in North America. Wine from small Lucca producers is also difficult to find abroad.

### ★ **Antica Bottega di Prospero**

FOOD/CANDY | Stop by this shop for top-quality local food products, including farro, dried porcini mushrooms, olive oil, and wine. ✉ *Via San Lucia 13* ☎ 0583/494 875.

### ★ **Caniparoli**

FOOD/CANDY | Chocolate lovers will be pleased with the selection of artisanal chocolates, marzipan delights, and gorgeous cakes. Creations become even more fanciful during two big Christian holidays: Christmas and Easter. ✉ *Via San Paolino 96* ☎ 0583/53456 🌐 [www.caniparolicioccolateria.it](http://www.caniparolicioccolateria.it).

### ★ **Enoteca Vanni**

WINE/SPIRITS | A huge selection of wines, as well as an ancient cellar, make this place worth a stop. For the cost of the wine only, tastings can be organized through the shopkeepers and are held in the cellar or outside in a lovely little piazza. All of this can be paired with *affettati misti* (sliced cured meats) and cheeses of the highest caliber. ✉ *Piazza San Salvatore 7* ☎ 0583/491902 🌐 [www.enotecavanni.com](http://www.enotecavanni.com).

### **Massei Ugo**

FOOD/CANDY | This small shop offers great wine prices and assorted local delicacies. The store's owner, Ugo Massei, doesn't speak English, but he's

friendly and helpful. ✉ *Via S. Andrea 19* ☎ 0583/467656.

## MARKETS

### Antiques Market

OUTDOOR/FLEA/GREEN MARKETS | FAMILY | On the third weekend of the month an antiques market happens in and around Piazza San Martino. Vendors unveil their wares around 8:30, and start packing up around dusk. There's something for everyone, including old-fashioned glassware, ancient coins, and furniture—some antique, some just old. ✉ *Lucca*.

### Bookstalls

OUTDOOR/FLEA/GREEN MARKETS | Just behind the church of San Giusto (off Via Beccheria, which runs for about two blocks between Piazza Napoleone and Piazza San Michele) are bookstalls that open their cupboard doors on clement days (including Sunday), from about 10 am to 7 pm. You may discover anything from hand-tinted prints of orchids to back issues of *Uomo Ragno* (Spiderman looks and acts just the same even when he's speaking Italian). ✉ *Lucca*.

## PASTRIES

### Pasticceria Pinelli

FOOD/CANDY | For a broad selection of scrumptious pastries, visit this favorite haunt of Lucca's senior citizens, who frequently stop in after Sunday Mass. ✉ *Via Beccheria 28* ☎ 0583/496119 🌐 [www.pasticceriapinelli.lucca.it](http://www.pasticceriapinelli.lucca.it).

### ★ Pasticceria Taddeucci

FOOD/CANDY | A particularly delicious version of *buccellato*—the sweet, anise-flavored bread with raisins that is a Luccan specialty—is baked at Pasticceria Taddeucci. ✉ *Piazza San Michele 34* ☎ 0583/494933 🌐 [www.buccellatotaddeucci.com](http://www.buccellatotaddeucci.com).

# San Marcello Pistoiese

*33 km (21 miles) northwest of Pistoia, 66 km (41 miles) northwest of Florence.*

This small town—small, but still the largest in the area—bustles in summer and winter (when it’s one of Tuscany’s few ski destinations), but calms down in spring and fall. It’s set amid spectacular scenery; you can drive across a dramatic suspension bridge over the Lima River.

## GETTING HERE

By car, you’re likely to approach San Marcello Pistoiese from Pistoia; take the SS435 to the SS66, which takes you right into town (follow the signs). COPIT provides frequent bus service as well. There is no train service.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS** **San Marcello Pistoiese Tourism Office.** ✉ *Piazza del Duomo, Pistoia* ☎ 0573/21622 🌐 [www.pistoia.turismo.toscana.it](http://www.pistoia.turismo.toscana.it).

## S Sights

### **Pieve di San Marcello**

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | This church dates from the 12th century, though the interior was redone in the 18th century and most of the art inside is from that period.

✉ *Piazza Arcangeli* 🆓 *Free.*

# The Garfagnana and the Northwest Coast



## Abetone

*20 km (12 miles) northwest of San Marcello Pistoiese, 53 km (33 miles) northwest of Pistoia, 86 km (53 miles) northwest of Florence.*

Abetone is one of the most-visited vacation spots in the Apennine Mountains, where Tuscans, Emilia-Romagnans, and others come to ski. Set above two valleys, the resort town is on the edge of a lush and ancient forest of more than 9,000 acres. The numerous ski trails are mostly for beginners and intermediate skiers (the entire area has only two expert slopes). Summer is the time to trek or mountain bike in and around the beautiful hills and mountains.

### GETTING HERE

By car from Pistoia, take the SS435/SR436 and follow signs for Abetone-Modena. You'll exit onto the SS66/SR66; continue for some 30 km (18 miles) to the SS12, which will take you into Abetone. COPIT buses run to Abetone, but there is no train service.

## S Sights

### San Pellegrino in Alpe

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | Stop at the San Pellegrino in Alpe monastery en route from Abetone to Castelnuovo di Garfagnana to see the staggering view and the large wooden cross. The story goes that a 9th-century Scot, Pellegrino ("Little Pilgrim") by name, came to this spot to repent. ✉ *Via del Voltone 14, Off SR12, 16 km (10 miles) northeast of Castelnuovo di Garfagnana, 28 km (17 miles) northwest of Abetone, San Pellegrino in Alpe* ☎ 0583/649072 🌐 [www.sanpellegrinoinalpe.it](http://www.sanpellegrinoinalpe.it) 📄 Free.

## r Restaurants



## Ciuste

\$ | ITALIAN | Come here for a finely crafted sandwich (they have 18 different varieties on the menu), or something more substantial like the *crostone ai funghi* (a very large portion of toasted bread topped with local, fragrant porcini mushrooms). Tiny local blueberries, in season, appear in numerous guises on the dessert menu. **Known for:** eating while breathing fine mountain air; fantastic sandwiches; youthful atmosphere. [💰] *Average main:* €13 [✉] *Via dell'Uccellaria 22* [📞] 0573/1720114 [🌐] [www.weloveabetone.it](http://www.weloveabetone.it).

## La Capannina

\$\$ | ITALIAN | Duccio Ugolini is in the kitchen, and his wife, Miriam Manni, runs this large, one-room trattoria, which has a grand view of beautiful woods and ski slopes. In the middle of the room is a fireplace, which casts a lovely glow in cooler months. **Known for:** local ingredients like mushrooms and chestnuts; exquisite wine list; delectable desserts. [💰] *Average main:* €16 [✉] *Via Brennero 256* [📞] 0573/60562 [🌐] [www.weloveabetone.it](http://www.weloveabetone.it) [🕒] *Closed Mon., and 2 wks in May and Oct.*

# h Hotels

## Hotel Bellavista

\$ | HOTEL | Originally a 19th-century villa belonging to Marchesa Guendalina Strozzi—her ancestors were powerful bankers in Renaissance Florence—this is now a contemporary inn. **Pros:** you can ski from hotel to chairlift; pretty views; some rooms have a whirlpool tub. **Cons:** attracts a rowdy crowd; a car is a necessity; some complain of noise in the halls. [💰] *Rooms from:* €73 [✉] *Via Brennero 383* [📞] 0573/60028 [🌐] [www.abetonebellavista.it](http://www.abetonebellavista.it) [🕒] *Closed May, Oct., and Nov.* [🛏] 42 rooms [🍳] *Free breakfast.*

# a Activities

## SKIING

### Consorzio Impianti

SKIING/SNOWBOARDING | This group manages the ski facilities in Abetone and has information on the Multipass, as well as maps, directions, and area information. ✉ *Via Brennero 429* ☎ *0573/60557* 🌐  
[www.multipassabetone.it](http://www.multipassabetone.it).

### **Pistoiese ski area**

SKIING/SNOWBOARDING | The area has 37 ski slopes, amounting to about 50 km (31 miles) of ski surface, all accessible through the purchase of a single Multipass. You can check the Abetone section of the Pistoiese ski area website for details on the Multipass, or call the Tourist Information office in Pistoia. ✉ *Abetone*.

## Bagni di Lucca

*36 km (22 miles) southwest of Abetone, 27 km (17 miles) north of Lucca, 101 km (63 miles) northwest of Florence.*

Pretty Bagni di Lucca was a fashionable spa town in the early 19th century—in part because of its thermal waters. The Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822) installed his family here during the summer of 1818. He wrote to a friend in July of that year that the waters here were exceedingly refreshing: “My custom is to undress and sit on the rocks, reading Herodotus, until perspiration has subsided, and then to leap from the edge of the rock into this fountain.” In 1853, Robert and Elizabeth Browning spent the summer in a house on the main square. Its heyday behind it, the town is now a quiet, charming place where elegant thermal spas still soothe on temperate summer days.

### GETTING HERE

By car from Florence, take the A11 and exit at Capannori. Take the SS439 in the direction of Lucca. From Lucca, take the SS12/Via del Brennero. This leads to the SP18, which takes you directly into Bagni di Lucca. Lazzi bus lines also operate from Lucca and Florence. Trains run nearly every hour from Lucca and take about 25 minutes.

### VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS** **Bagni di Lucca tourism office.** ✉ *Via Umberto I 139* 📞  
0583/805754 🌐 [www.turismobagnidilucca.com](http://www.turismobagnidilucca.com).

## S Sights

### Centro Termale Bagni di Lucca

**SPA—SIGHT** | Here you’ll find two natural steam-room caves, as well as spa services such as mud baths, massage, hydrotherapy, and facials. ✉ *Piazza San Martino 11* 📞 0583/87221 🌐 [www.termebagnidilucca.it](http://www.termebagnidilucca.it) 🏠 €15 for

*thermal pool; spa services vary.*

### **Il Ponte della Maddalena** (*The Magdalen's Bridge*)

BRIDGE/TUNNEL | FAMILY | Il Ponte della Maddalena is, oddly, also known as the Devil's Bridge. Commissioned in all likelihood by Matilde di Canossa (1046–1115), it was restructured by the petty despot Castruccio Castracani in the early 14th century. It's worth the climb to the middle—the bridge is narrow, steep, and pedestrians-only—to check out the view. Despite 1836 flood damage and early-20th-century alterations, it seems little changed from the Middle Ages. If you're heading north along the Serchio from Lucca to Bagni di Lucca, you will see the bridge on your left. ☒ *Bagni di Lucca.*

## **r Restaurants**

### **Osteria i Macelli**

\$ | TUSCAN | Honest Tuscan cooking prevails at this simple trattoria next to a large parking lot. No matter that there's no view: the terrific food and pleasing service—all of it served in a typical Tuscan dining room with high timbered ceilings—make a stop here well worth the detour. **Known for:** creative pasta dishes. ☒ *Average main: €11* ☒ *Piazza i Macelli, Borgo a Mozzano, 21 km (13 miles) north of Lucca on the SS12* ☎ *0583/88700* ⌵ *Closed 2 wks in Mar.*

# Barga

*17 km (11 miles) northwest of Bagni di Lucca, 111 km (69 miles) northwest of Florence.*

Barga is a lovely little city (one of Italy's smallest under that classification) with a finely preserved medieval core. It produced textiles—mostly silk—during the Renaissance and wool in the 18th century. You won't find textiles here today; now the emphasis is on tourism. Here the African-American troops known as the Buffalo Soldiers are remembered by the locals for their bravery in defending this mountainous area during World War II.

Walking around Barga is not for the faint of heart: it's one steep uphill after another to get to the tiny centro storico, and more steps to get to Piazza del Duomo.

## GETTING HERE

By car from Lucca, take the SS12/Via del Brennero directly to Barga. Though there is train service to Barga, the station is far away from the centro storico. The only bus option is the small CLAP line (✉ *Via Roma 7* ☎ 0583/723050), which runs between here and Castelnuovo di Garfagnana.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS** **Barga tourism office.** ✉ *Via di Mezzo 45* ☎ 0583/724791 🌐 [www.comune.barga.lu.it](http://www.comune.barga.lu.it).

# S Sights

## Duomo

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | Dedicated to St. Christopher, the Duomo is a Romanesque cathedral, made from elegant limestone (quarried from nearby caves), which saw four separate building campaigns. The first began in the 9th century, and it was only finished in the 15th. Inside, the intricately carved pulpit, one of the finest examples of mid-12th-century Tuscan sculpture, commands center

stage. The view from the Duomo is incredible: Tuscan mountains have never looked so good. ✉ *Via del Duomo*.

## Grotta del Vento

**NATURE SITE** | About 14 km (9 miles) southwest of Barga, after following a winding road flanked by both sheer cliffs and fantastic views, you come to Tuscany's Cave of the Wind. As the result of a steady internal temperature of 10.7°C (about 51°F), the wind is sucked into the cave in the winter and blown out in the summer. It has a long cavern with stalactites, stalagmites, "bottomless" pits, and subterranean streams. One-, two-, and three-hour guided tours of the cave are given. (The one-hour tour is offered only from November through March.) ✉ *SP 39, west at Galliciano, Vergemoli* ☎ 0583/722024, 0583/722053 🌐 [www.grottadelvento.com](http://www.grottadelvento.com) 📄 From €9.

## h Hotels

### ★ Casa Fontana

\$\$ | **B&B/INN** | Ron and Susi Gaud have transformed an 18th-century town house into a cozy little B&B nestled in the heart of Barga. **Pros:** phenomenal hosts; wonderful views from many rooms. **Cons:** three-night minimum stay; no in-room televisions; spotty Wi-Fi. 💰 *Rooms from: €160* ✉ *Via di Mezzo 77* ☎ 0039/3496842721 🌐 [www.casa-fontana.com](http://www.casa-fontana.com) ⌄ *Closed Nov.–mid-Mar.* ➡ *6 rooms* 🍴 | *Free breakfast.*

## p Performing Arts

### Barga Jazz

**FESTIVALS** | Listen to the newest music during Barga Jazz, a jazz orchestra competition (in July and August). The scores presented each year are selected by a special committee, and a winner is selected by an international jury. ✉ *Teatro dell'Accademia dei Differenti, Piazza Angelio 4* 🌐 [www.bargajazz.it](http://www.bargajazz.it).

### Opera Barga

**FESTIVALS** | From mid-July to mid-August, the stony streets of Barga come

alive as opera fans come to Opera Barga. This highly regarded opera festival takes place at the **Teatro dell'Accademia dei Differenti** (Theater of the Academy of the Different). The Opera Barga began in 1967 as a workshop for young singers and musicians. Now it stages lesser-known Baroque operas, as well as contemporary works. ✉ *Teatro dell'Accademia dei Differenti, Piazza Angelio 4* ☎ 0583/711068 🌐 [www.operabarga.it](http://www.operabarga.it).

# Castelnuovo di Garfagnana

13 km (8 miles) northwest of Barga, 47 km (27 miles) north of Lucca, 121 km (75 miles) northwest of Florence.

Castelnuovo di Garfagnana might be the best base for exploring the Garfagnana, because it's central with respect to the other towns. During the Renaissance the town's fortunes were frequently tied to those of the powerful Este family of Ferrara. It's now a bustling town with a lovely historic center.

## GETTING HERE

By car from Lucca, take the SS12/Via del Brennero, follow signs to Borgo a Mozzano; then take the SS445, which leads directly into town.

## CLAP buses

Buses run between Castelnuovo di Garfagnana and Barga. You can purchase tickets at Paolini, the tobacconist's shop in Piazza della Repubblica. (Note that the journey must make all stops, as many of the buses take more than one hour to get to and from either place, whereas journey by car takes about a half hour.) ✉ *Piazza della Repubblica*.

There is no train service.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS Castelnuovo di Garfagnana tourism office.** ✉ *Piazza della Erbe* ☎ 0583/641007 🌐 [www.castelnuovogarfagnana.org](http://www.castelnuovogarfagnana.org).

## S Sights

### Duomo

RELIGIOUS SITE | Dedicated to St. Peter, the Duomo was begun in the 11th century and was reconstructed in the early 1500s. Inside is a crucifix dating from the 14th to 15th century. There's also an early-16th-century terracotta attributed to the school of the della Robbia. ✉ *Piazza del Duomo* 🏠



0583/62170.

### **La Rocca** (*The Fortress*)

**MILITARY SITE** | Dating from the 13th century, *La Rocca* (The Fortress) has a plaque commemorating writer Ludovico Ariosto's brief tenure here as commissar general for the Este. Ariosto (1474–1533) wrote the epic poem *Orlando Furioso* (1516), among other works. You can only see the impressive walls and great entryway of the fort from the outside—at this writing, entry into La Rocca was not allowed. ✉ *Piazza Umberto*.

### **Parco Naturale delle Alpi Apuane**

**NATURE PRESERVE** | The Parco Regionale delle Alpi Apuane (Regional Park of the Apuan Alps) straddles the hills of coastal Versilia and spreads mostly across the mountainous Garfagnana inland. It includes caves, grottoes, peaks, and valleys. Hiking, riding, and mountain bike trails cross the park. There are various points of access for various types of excursions, and all are clearly indicated on the interactive park map. The park's visitor center is in the town of Castelnuovo Garfagnana. ✉ *Castelnuovo di Garfagnana* ☎ 0583/644242 🌐 [www.parcapuane.it](http://www.parcapuane.it) 📄 *Free*.

## **r Restaurants**

### ★ **Osteria Vecchio Mulino**

\$\$ | **TUSCAN** | “The old mill” has an antique marble serving counter filled with free nibbles and two large wooden tables in a room lined with wine bottles. The enthusiastic host, Andrea Bertucci, proudly touts local products on his simple menu, which usually consists of superior cheese and *affettati misti* (mixed sliced cured meats). **Known for:** commitment to local ingredients; exceptional wine list; exuberant host. 💰 *Average main: €18* ✉ *Via Vittorio Emanuele 12* ☎ 0583/62192 🌐 [www.vecchiomulino.info](http://www.vecchiomulino.info) 🕒 *Closed Mon., and 3 wks in Oct. or Jan.*

## **a Activities**

## HIKING AND CLIMBING

### Centro Accoglienza Parco

CLIMBING/MOUNTAINEERING | Stop here for help with hiking information, particularly for the Parco Naturale delle Alpi Apuane. ✉ *Piazza Erbe 1* ☎ 0583/644242 🌐 [www.turismo.garfagnana.eu](http://www.turismo.garfagnana.eu).

### Club Alpino Italiano

CLIMBING/MOUNTAINEERING | For detailed maps and information about trekking in the mountains surrounding Castelnuovo di Garfagnana, contact the Club Alpino Italiano. ✉ *Via Vittorio Emanuele* ☎ 02/2057231 🌐 [www.cai.it](http://www.cai.it).

## Livorno

*24 km (15 miles) south of Pisa, 187 km (116 miles) west of Florence.*

Livorno is a gritty city with a long and interesting history. In the early Middle Ages it alternately belonged to Pisa and Genoa. In 1421 Florence, seeking access to the sea, bought it. Cosimo I de' Medici (1519–74) started construction of the harbor in 1571, putting Livorno on the map. After Ferdinando I de' Medici (1549–1609) proclaimed Livorno a free city, it became a haven for people suffering from religious persecution; Roman Catholics from England and Jews and Moors from Spain and Portugal, among others, settled here. The *Quattro Mori* (Four Moors), also known as the Monument to Ferdinando I, commemorates this. (The statue of Ferdinando I dates from 1595, the bronze Moors by Pietro Tacca from the 1620s.)

In the following centuries, and particularly in the 18th, Livorno boomed as a port. In the 19th century the town drew a host of famous Brits passing through on their grand tours. Its prominence continued up to World War II, when it was heavily bombed. Much of the town's architecture, therefore, postdates the war, and it's somewhat difficult to imagine what it might have looked like before. Livorno has recovered from the war, however, as it's become a huge point of departure for container ships, as well as the only spot in Tuscany for cruise ships to dock for the day.

Most of Livorno's artistic treasures date from the 17th century and aren't all that interesting unless you dote on obscure Baroque artists. Livorno's most famous native artist, Amedeo Modigliani (1884–1920), was of much more recent vintage. Sadly, there's no notable work by him in his hometown.

There may not be much in the way of art, but it's still worth strolling around the city. The **Mercato Nuovo**, which has been around since 1894, sells all sorts of fruits, vegetables, grains, meat, and fish. Outdoor markets nearby are also chock-full of local color. The presence of Camp Darby, an American military base just outside town, accounts for the availability of many American products.

If you have time, Livorno is worth a stop for lunch or dinner at the very least.

## GETTING HERE

Livorno is easily reached by rail; trains from Florence run hourly. By car it's about an hour west of Florence on the Fi-Pi-Li.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS Livorno tourism office.** ✉ *Via Pieroni 18/20* ☎ 0586/894236  
🌐 [www.comune.livorno.it](http://www.comune.livorno.it).

## r Restaurants

### ★ Cantina Nardi

\$ | ITALIAN | It's open only for lunch and it's well off the beaten path (even if it is in the center of Livorno's shopping district), but getting here is worth the trouble: this tiny place has a short menu that changes daily, a superb wine list, and gregarious staff. Their *baccalà alla livornese* (deep-fried salt cod served with chickpeas) is succulent and crisp; soups, such as *ribollita*, are very soothing. **Known for:** to-die-for wines; tiny sandwiches stuffed with tasty things; worth the detour. 💰 *Average main: €11* ✉ *Via Cambini 6/8* ☎ 0586/808006 🌐 [www.cantinanardi.it](http://www.cantinanardi.it) 😞 *Closed Sun. No dinner.*

### L'Ostricaio

\$\$ | TUSCAN | Locals crowd into this tiny place with a lovely view at lunch and dinner to feast on treats from the sea. Antipasti such as raw oysters, or *code di manzancolle* (deep-fried shrimp) are perfect starters, followed by delicious pasta dishes or succulent mixed fry. **Known for:** raw oysters and shrimp; creative pasta dishes; lively, convivial atmosphere. 💰 *Average main: €15* ✉ *Viale Italia 100* ☎ 0586/581345.

### Osteria del Mare

\$\$ | SEAFOOD | Husband and wife Claudio and Marila run this fish restaurant across the (busy) street from the docks. The decor's nothing to write home about (paneled walls with framed prints and navigational coats of arms), but it's all about the creative dishes and desserts. **Known for:** inventive dishes;

fish of the day; Marila's cheesecake. 💰 *Average main: €17* ✉ *Borgo Cappuccini 5* ☎ *0586/881027* 🕒 *Closed Thurs.*

### **Ristorante Gennarino**

\$\$ | ITALIAN | Lovers of seafood fill this unpretentious trattoria. The unremarkable decor (yellowed walls, fluorescent lights) can be taken as a testament to the singular focus here on high-quality cuisine. **Known for:** fish of the day; excellent wine list; fine waitstaff. 💰 *Average main: €15* ✉ *Via Santa Fortunata 11* ☎ *0586/888093* 🌐 [www.ristorantegennarino.it](http://www.ristorantegennarino.it) 🕒 *Closed Wed., and 15 days in June.*

## Viareggio

8 km (5 miles) south of Pietrasanta, 25 km (15 miles) northwest of Lucca, 97 km (60 miles) northwest of Florence.

Tobias Smollett (1721–71), the English novelist, wrote in the 1760s that Viareggio was “a kind of sea-port on the Mediterranean.... The roads are indifferent and the accommodation is execrable.” Much has changed here since Smollett’s time. For one, this beach town becomes very crowded in summer, so accommodations are plentiful. It can also be loud and brassy at the height of the season, though there’s peace and quiet in the autumn and early spring.

Viareggio has numerous buildings decorated in the 1920s Liberty style, characterized by colorful wood and some with ornate exterior decoration. Locals and tourists alike stroll along the town’s wide seaside promenade lined with bars, cafés, and some very fine restaurants. If you can’t make it to Venice for *Carnevale* (Carnival), come here, where the festivities are in some ways more fun than in Venice. The city is packed with revelers from all over Tuscany, taking part in the riot of colorful parades with giant floats. Book lodging far in advance, and be aware that hotels charge top prices during Carnevale.

### GETTING HERE

Trains run frequently from Florence on the Lucca line. By car from Lucca, take the A11 and follow the signs for Viareggio. Exit at Massarosa and take the SS439 to the SP5, which goes into the center of town.

### VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS** **Viareggio tourism office.** ✉ *Viale, Carducci 10* ☎  
0584/962233 🌐 [www.luccaturismo.it](http://www.luccaturismo.it).

## r Restaurants

## ★ Pino Ristorante

\$\$\$ | TUSCAN | Locals swear by this unpretentious trattoria a couple of blocks away from the beach. The Artizzu family has been serving specialties from the sea since 1979 in their small eatery with yellow-sponged walls. **Known for:** dishes vary depending on conditions at sea; crunchy fritto misto (mixed fish fry); Patrizia's must-try desserts. [📍] *Average main: €35* [✉] *Via Matteotti 18* [📞] *0584/961356* [🌐] [www.ristorantepino.it](http://www.ristorantepino.it) [🕒] *Closed Wed.*

## Romano

\$\$\$\$ | SEAFOOD | The Franceschini family has been running this swank seafood eatery since the 1970s. Ebullient host Romano Franceschini is justifiably proud of the food formerly produced by his wife, Franca (she still oversees the kitchen); son Roberto, an accomplished sommelier, presides over the floor. **Known for:** fish brought daily from the docks; phenomenal wine list; Romano and Roberto. [📍] *Average main: €45* [✉] *Via Mazzini 122* [📞] *0584/31382* [🌐] [www.romanoristorante.it](http://www.romanoristorante.it) [🕒] *Closed Mon. and Jan. No lunch Tues. in July and Aug.*

# p Performing Arts

## Carnevale

FESTIVALS | For four Sundays and Shrove Tuesday preceding Lent, this little seaside town produces its world-famous Carnevale, with intricate floats, or *carri*, representing Italy's most influential celebrities and politicians and sometimes the famous and infamous from around the world. Started in the late 1800s, the Viareggio Carnevale differs from the carnival held in Venice because of its parades of huge and fantastical floats. Traditionally, they were put together by Viareggio's shipbuilders, and in the beginning the masked celebrants were civil and political protesters, and the floats were, and often still are, used as a vehicle to lampoon popular figures of the day. Other events—music, parties, and art displays—also take place during Carnevale. The crowds are huge, with many attending in costume. [✉] *Viareggio* [📞] *0584/962568* [🌐] [viareggio.ilcarnevale.com](http://viareggio.ilcarnevale.com).

## a Activities

### **Club Nautico Versilia**

**SAILING** | Sailors who wish to tour the coastal waters should contact Club Nautico Versilia for assistance with maps, port and docking information, charter and craft-rental resources, and information about craft repair and refueling. ✉ *Piazza Palombardi dell'Artiglio* ☎ *0584/31444* 🌐 [www.clubnauticoversilia.it](http://www.clubnauticoversilia.it).



# Forte dei Marmi

*8 km (5 miles) south of Massa, 37 km (27 miles) northwest of Lucca, 106 km (66 miles) northwest of Florence.*

Forte dei Marmi is a playground for wealthy Italians and equally well-heeled visitors. Its wide, sandy beaches—strands are 6 km (4 miles) long—have the Alpi Apuane as a dramatic backdrop. The town was, from Roman times, the port for marble quarried in Carrara. In the 1920s the Agnelli family (of Fiat fame) began summering here, and other tycoons followed suit. It remains the East Hampton of Italy; everyone seems to be dripping in gold, and prices are very high. In winter the town's population is about 7,000; in summer, it swells to about 150,000, most of those folks staying in their own private villas.

## GETTING HERE

By car from Florence, take the A11, following signs for Viareggio. From there, take the A12/E80 following signs for Genova. Exit at Versilia, and take the SP70 directly into town. Taking a train here is not recommended as the station is far from town.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS Forte dei Marmi tourism office.** ✉ Piazza Garibaldi 1 ☎  
0584/280292.

## 🍴 Restaurants

### La Magnolia

\$\$\$ | TUSCAN | Part of the elegant Hotel Byron but open to the public, La Magnolia is helmed by chef Cristoforo Trapani who knows his basics and allows flights of fantasy to take over. The games begin with amuse-bouches; his take on *fegatini* (a typical Tuscan chicken liver spread) with a gelatin made from Aleatico (a serious red wine) sets the stage for what's to follow.

**Known for:** creative menu; fantastic wine list; the serenity of the place. [💰]  
Average main: €29 ✉ Viale Morin 46 ☎ 0584/787052 🌐  
[www.hotelbyron.net](http://www.hotelbyron.net) 🕒 Closed Oct.–Easter.

## Lorenzo

\$\$\$\$ | SEAFOOD | The affable Lorenzo Viani has presided here for more than 30 years, and his restaurant still draws a well-heeled, sophisticated crowd. The menu relies heavily on creatures from the sea; a typical and tasty starter is the *spaghetti versiliese* with shellfish and fresh tomato. **Known for:** sophisticated dishes in an equally sophisticated space; tasting menus with the freshest ingredients; stellar service. [💰] Average main: €40 ✉ Via Carducci 61 ☎ 0584/874030 🌐 [www.ristorantelorenzo.com](http://www.ristorantelorenzo.com) 🕒 Closed Mon. No lunch Tues. No dinner Oct.15–Mar. 31.

## Pesce Baracca

\$ | ITALIAN | The first thing you'll see upon entering this *mercato e cucina* (market and kitchen) is a row of dazzling just-caught fish on ice, and a display case with prepared foods to go. Select from a large array of *crudi* (including several raw oyster options) before opting for the fry (either mixed, anchovies, zucchini with squid, or fish croquettes) or the very tasty fish burger. **Known for:** the fine relationship of quality to price; seaside views; fine staff. [💰] Average main: €10 ✉ Viale Franceschi 2 ☎ 0584/1716337 🌐 [www.pescebaracca.it](http://www.pescebaracca.it) 🕒 Closed Mon.

# h Hotels

## ★ Byron

\$\$\$\$ | HOTEL | The pale yellow exterior only hints at the elegance inside the hotel created by joining two Liberty villas dating from 1899 and 1902. **Pros:** golf and tennis privileges; fantastic hotel bar; free bikes. **Cons:** not open year-round; expensive; hard to get a reservation during high season. [💰] Rooms from: €670 ✉ Viale Morin 46 ☎ 0584/787052, 0584/787152 🌐 [www.hotelbyron.net](http://www.hotelbyron.net) 🕒 Closed Oct.–Easter 🛏 28 rooms 🍳 Free breakfast.

## n Nightlife

### **Almarosa Art Music and Bar**

**BARS/PUBS** | After a day at the beach, the place to see and be seen is Almarosa Art Music and Bar. The clientele during high season frequently includes Italian soccer players, celebrities, and politicians. ✉ *Viale Morin 89/a* ☎ 0584/82503 🌐 [www.almarosa.it](http://www.almarosa.it).

## a Activities

### **BIKING**

#### **Claudio Maggi Cicli**

**BICYCLING** | This shop has been selling bicycle equipment and renting bikes since 1906. From May through September it's open daily 8 to 1 and 3 to 8; from October through April it's closed Wednesday and Sunday. ✉ *Viale Ammiraglio Morin 85* ☎ 0584/89529, 0584/81699 🌐 [www.ciclimaggi.it](http://www.ciclimaggi.it).

#### **Coppa Bikes**

**BICYCLING** | Right on the beach, Coppa rents bicycles and keeps late hours: 8 am to midnight daily from May through August, 8 to 8 daily the rest of the year. ✉ *Via A. Franceschi 4/d* ☎ 0584/83528.

### **HIKING AND CLIMBING**

#### **Forte dei Marmi Club Alpino Italiano**

**CLIMBING/MOUNTAINEERING** | This group can provide guided tours, as well as information on area hiking, spelunking, and rock climbing. ✉ *Via Buonarroti 47* ☎ 0584/789 095 🌐 [www.caifortedeimarmi.it](http://www.caifortedeimarmi.it).

### **SCUBA DIVING**

#### **Associazione Subacquei Versilia**

**SCUBA DIVING** | For information about the best places to scuba dive on the Versilian and Ligurian coasts, contact the Associazione Subacquei Versilia. ✉ *Via S. Allende 38* ☎ 347/594 7951 🌐 [www.subversilia.it](http://www.subversilia.it).

# Carrara

*45 km (28 miles) southeast of Riomaggiore, 126 km (79 miles) northwest of Florence.*

Carrara, from which the famous white marble takes its name, lies in a beautiful valley midway up a spectacular mountain in the Apuane Alps. The surrounding peaks are free of foliage and white as snow, even in summer, because they are full of marble stone. Marble has been quarried in the area for the past 2,000 years. The art historian Giorgio Vasari (1511–74) recorded that Michelangelo came to Carrara with two apprentices to quarry the marble for the never-completed tomb of Julius II (1443–1513). According to Vasari, Michelangelo spent eight months among the rocks conceiving fantastical ideas for future works.

## GETTING HERE

By car, take the A11, following signs for Lucca, then at Viareggio take the A12. Trains run frequently from Florence, but a change of trains is almost always required, and the Carrara station is not centrally located. Coming from Lucca, you usually have to change trains at Viareggio.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS Carrara tourism office.** ✉ *Lungomare A. Vespucci 24, Marina di Massa* ☎ *0585/240063* 🌐 [www.turismomassacarrara.it](http://www.turismomassacarrara.it).

# S Sights

## Accademia di Belle Arti

**COLLEGE** | During the 19th and 20th centuries Carrara became a hotbed for anarchism, and during World War II it put up fierce resistance to the Nazis. The town is still lively thanks to its art institute. The Accademia di Belle Arti, founded by Maria Teresa Cybo Malaspina d'Este in 1769, draws studio art students from all over Italy. This may explain why there are many good bars

and cafés in many of the town's squares. ✉ *Carrara* 🌐  
[www.accademiacarrara.it](http://www.accademiacarrara.it).

## Duomo

RELIGIOUS SITE | Work began on the Duomo in the 11th century and continued into the 14th. The cathedral, dedicated to St. Andrew, is the first church of the Middle Ages constructed entirely of marble. Most of it comes from the area (the white, light blue-gray, black, and red). The tremendous facade is a fascinating blend of Pisan Romanesque and Gothic influences. Note the human figures and animals on Corinthian capitals. ✉ *Piazza del Duomo*.

## Marble quarries

INFO CENTER | The area around Carrara has a lot of still-active quarries—well over 100 at last count. Most of them are not open to the public for safety reasons. However, it is possible to tour specific marble caves. The Carrara tourism office, 7 km (4½ miles) away in Marina di Massa, has details about which areas you can visit. ✉ *Carrara tourism office*:, *Lungomare A. Vespucci 24, Marina di Massa* ☎ *0585/240063* 🌐  
[www.turismomassacarrara.it](http://www.turismomassacarrara.it).

## Museo Civico del Marmo (*Marble Museum*)

MUSEUM | Carrara's history as a marble-producing center is well documented in the Museo del Marmo, beginning with early works from the 2nd century. Exhibits detail the working of marble, from quarrying and transporting it to sculpting it. ✉ *Viale XX Settembre 85* ☎ *0585/845746* 🌐  
[www.aptmassacarrara.it](http://www.aptmassacarrara.it) 📧 €5 🕒 *Closed Mon.*

## San Francesco

RELIGIOUS SITE | The lovely Baroque church of San Francesco is a study in understated elegance. It dates from the 1620s to 1660s, and even though it was built during the peak years of the Baroque, the only excess can be found in the twisting marble columns embellishing the altars. ✉ *Piazza XXVII Aprile*.

## r Restaurants

### Ristorante Venanzio

\$ | TUSCAN | *Lardo di colonnata*, treated pork fat, is a gastronomic specialty in Tuscany, and there's no place better to try it than the place from which it hails. From the center of Carrara, the restaurant is a 15-minute drive up winding roads cut through marble-filled mountains. **Known for:** succulent primi; local ingredients; terrific semifreddi. 💰 *Average main: €13* ✉ *Piazza Palestro 3, Colonnata Carrara, 1 mile from Carrara* ☎ *0585/758033* 🌐 [www.ristorantevenanzio.com](http://www.ristorantevenanzio.com) 🕒 *Closed Thurs. No dinner Sun.*



## Chapter 5

# CHIANTI, SIENA, AND CENTRAL TUSCANY

Updated by  
Patricia Rucidlo



 Sights  
★★★★★

 Restaurants  
★★★★★

 Hotels  
★★★★☆

 Shopping  
★★★☆☆

 Nightlife  
★★★☆☆



# WELCOME TO CHIANTI, SIENA, AND CENTRAL TUSCANY

## TOP REASONS TO GO

★ **The Piazza del Campo, Siena:** Sip a cappuccino or enjoy some gelato as you take in this spectacular shell-shape piazza.

★ **San Gimignano:** Grab a spot at sunset on the steps of the Collegiata as flocks of swallows swoop in and out of the famous medieval towers.

★ **Cheering the Palio in Siena:** Vie for a spot among thousands to salute the winners of this race, which takes over Siena's main square twice each year.

Undulating hills blanketed with vineyards, groves of silver-green olive trees, and enchanting towns perched on hilltops are the essence of central Tuscany. Siena, with its extraordinary piazza and magnificent cathedral, anchors the southern end of the region. Cypress-lined roads wind their way west to San Gimignano and Volterra, and north through the Chianti district.



- 1 Chianti.** The heart of Italy's most famous wine region.
- 2 Greve in Chianti.** Medieval town 30 km from Florence.
- 3 Passignano.** A beautiful, tiny hamlet.
- 4 Panzano.** Hilltop churches and river views
- 5 Castellina in Chianti.** Bucolic panoramas abound.
- 6 Radda in Chianti.** Tiny village perfect for strolling.
- 7 Gaiole in Chianti.** A market town since 1200.
- 8 Castelnuovo Berardenga.** Southernmost village in Chianti.
- 9 Siena.** Charming medieval town.
- 10 Monteriggioni.** Served as Siena's northernmost defense in the 13th century.
- 11 Colle di Val d'Elsa.** Modern town producing glass and crystal.
- 12 San Gimignano.** Hilltown with medieval "skyscrapers."
- 13 Volterra.** Handicrafts made with alabaster can be purchased here.
- 14 Le Balze.** The landscape here is featured in the Mona Lisa.

**Country roads wind around cypress trees on hilltops that often appear to catch and hold onto the clouds. Planted vineyards, fields, and orchards turn those curving hills into a patchwork of colors and textures that have inspired artists and delighted travelers for centuries.**

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Sitting majestically in the midst of all this natural splendor is Siena, longtime rival of Florence and one of Italy's best-preserved medieval cities. Other hilltop towns will beckon you as well: San Gimignano, with its lofty towers; the ancient city of Volterra, once capital of a flourishing Etruscan state; and myriad charming villages dotting the rolling hills of Chianti. The rolling hills are the region's most famous geographic feature, and you can expect to do a lot of winding up and down on the beautifully panoramic roads that link the area's hill towns. The narrow medieval streets of these old town centers are mostly closed to traffic. Park outside the city walls and walk in. Keep in mind that roads often lack shoulders in these parts, and that gas stations are rarely open Sunday.

Siena fills to the brim in the weeks surrounding the running of the Palio on July 2 and August 16, when prices, crowds, and commotion are at their highest. Between May and late September hotels and restaurants throughout the region fill up and foreign license plates and rental cars cram the roads. There's a reason for the crush: summer is a glorious time to be driving in the hills and sitting on terraces. If you want fewer crowds, try visiting during spring or fall. Spring can be especially spectacular, with blooming poppy fields, bursts of yellow broom, and wild irises growing by the side of the road. Fall is somewhat more soothing, when all those colors typically associated with Tuscany—oranges, warm ocher, mossy forest greens—predominate.

In the winter months you may have towns mostly to yourself, although the choices for hotels and restaurants can be a bit more limited than when the

season is in full swing. From November through mid-March it's fairly difficult to find a room in San Gimignano and Volterra: plan accordingly.

## MAJOR REGIONS

**Chianti.** The heart of Italy's most famous wine region is dotted with appealing towns. The largest, **Greve**, comes alive with a bustling local market in its town square every Saturday, while **Radda** sits on a hilltop in classic Tuscan style, ringed by a 14th-century walkway. Cutting through the region is the **Strada Chiantigiana**, one of Italy's most scenic drives.

**Siena.** Throughout the Middle Ages Siena competed with Florence for regional supremacy. Today it remains one of Italy's most enchanting medieval towns, with an exceptional Gothic cathedral and a main square, il Campo, that has magical charm.

**Monteriggioni and Colle di Val d'Elsa.** These two sleepy hill towns are pleasing, laid-back stops on the road between Siena and San Gimignano.

**San Gimignano.** From miles away you can spot San Gimignano's soaring medieval "skyscrapers"—towers that were once the ultimate status symbols of the aristocracy.

**Volterra.** Etruscan artifacts and Roman ruins are highlights of this city set in a rugged moonscape of a valley.

# Planner

## Making the Most of Your Time

Central Tuscany has an enticing landscape, one that invites you to follow its meandering roads to see where they might lead. Perhaps you'll come to a farmhouse selling splendid olive oil or one of the superb wines produced in the region; or perhaps you'll arrive at a medieval *pieve* (country church), an art-filled abbey, a *castello* (castle), or a restaurant where a flower-bedecked terrace looks out on a spectacular panorama.

Whatever road you take, **Siena**, Italy's most enchanting medieval city, is the one stop that's mandatory. The perfectly preserved *centro storico*, with its medieval palaces, is a delight to walk around; vehicle traffic is banned. Once in the region, however, there are plenty of other places to explore: **San Gimignano** is known as the "medieval Manhattan" because of its enormous towers, built by rival families, that still stand today. Like Siena, it benefited from commerce and trade along the pilgrimage routes, as the wonderful art in its churches and museums attests. With additional time, consider venturing farther afield to **Volterra**, with a stop in **Colle di Val d'Elsa** along the way.

## Getting Here and Around

### **BICYCLE TRAVEL**

In spring, summer, and fall, cyclists are as much a part of the landscape as the cypress trees. Many are on weeklong tours, but it's also possible to rent bikes or to join afternoon or day tours.

### **I Bike Italy**

I Bike Italy leads one-day rides through the Chianti countryside. ✉ *Via del Campuccio 88, Florence* ☎ 342/9352395 🌐 [www.ibikeitaly.com](http://www.ibikeitaly.com).

### **Marco Ramuzzi**

Marco Ramuzzi rents bikes by the day or week from his shop in Greve, and

organizes tours in the surrounding area. ✉ *Via Stecchi 23, Greve in Chianti*  
☎ 055/853037 🌐 [www.ramuzzi.com](http://www.ramuzzi.com).

## BUS TRAVEL

Buses are a reliable but time-consuming means of getting around the region because they often stop in every town.

### Busitalia

From Florence, these buses serve Siena (one hour) and numerous towns in the Chianti region. ✉ *Siena* ☎ 055/47821 🌐 [www.fsbusitalia.it](http://www.fsbusitalia.it).

### CPT

This agency provides infrequent bus service between Volterra and Colle di Val d'Elsa, and also connects Volterra with the nearest train station in Saline. ✉ *Pisa* ☎ 050/884111 🌐 [www.cttnord.it](http://www.cttnord.it).

### Tra-In

This bus company covers much of the territory south of Florence as well as the province of Siena. ✉ *Strada Statale Levante 73, Località Due Ponti, Siena* ☎ 0577/204111 🌐 [www.trainspa.it](http://www.trainspa.it).

## CAR TRAVEL

The best way to discover central Tuscany is by car, as its beauty often reveals itself along the road less traveled. The Certosa exit from the A1 highway (the Autostrada del Sole, running between Rome and Florence) provides direct access to the area. The Florence–Siena Superstrada (no number) is a four-lane, divided road with exits onto smaller country roads. The Via Cassia (SR2) winds its way south from Florence to Siena, along the western edge of the Chianti region. The superstrada is more direct, but much less scenic, than the SR2, and it can have a lot of traffic, especially on Sunday evening. The Strada Chiantigiana (SR222) cuts through Chianti, east of the superstrada, in a curvaceous path past vineyards and countryside.

From Poggibonsi, a modern town to the west of the superstrada, you can quickly reach San Gimignano and then take the SR68 toward Volterra. The SR68 continues westward to join the Via Aurelia (SR1), linking Pisa with

Rome.

## TRAIN TRAVEL

Traveling between Florence and Siena by train is quick and convenient; trains make the 80-minute trip several times a day, with a change in Empoli sometimes required. Train service also runs between Siena and Chiusi–Chianciano Terme, where you can make Rome–Florence connections. Siena’s train station is 2 km (1 mile) north of the centro storico, but cabs and city buses are readily available.

Other train service within the region is limited. For instance, the nearest station to Volterra is at Saline di Volterra, 10 km (6 miles) to the west. From Siena, trains run north to Poggibonsi and southeast to Sinalunga. Trains run from Chiusi–Chianciano Terme to Siena (one hour) with stops in Montepulciano Scalo, Sinalunga, and Asciano. There are no trains to San Gimignano, Monteriggioni, or the Chianti wine region.

## Trenitalia

You can check timetables on the website of the Italian state railway system and also get information and tickets at most travel agencies. ☎ 892021 toll-free in Italy 🌐 [www.trenitalia.com](http://www.trenitalia.com).

## Hotels

Siena, San Gimignano, and Volterra are among the most-visited towns in Tuscany, so there’s no lack of choice for hotels across the price ranges. You can often stay right on the main square. The best accommodations, however, are often a couple of miles outside town. If you’re staying a week, you have enough time to rent an *agriturismo* (working farm) apartment. Stock up your refrigerator with local groceries and wines, go for hikes in the hills, and take leisurely day trips to the main towns of the region.

*For expanded hotel reviews, visit [Fodors.com](http://Fodors.com).*



# What It Costs in Euros

\$

\$\$

\$\$\$

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## RESTAURANTS

under  
€15

€15–€24

€25–  
€35

over  
€35

## HOTELS

under  
€125

€125–  
€200

€201–  
€300

over  
€300

## Visitor Information

The tourist information office in Greve is an excellent source for general information about the Chianti wine region and its hilltop towns. In Siena the centrally located tourist office, in Piazza del Campo, has information about Siena and its province. Both offices book hotel rooms for a nominal fee. Offices in smaller towns can also be a good place to check if you need last-minute accommodations.

Tourist bureaus in larger towns are typically open from 8:30 to 1 and 3:30 to 6 or 7; bureaus in villages are generally open from Easter until early November, but usually remain closed Saturday afternoon and Sunday.

## Chianti

This is the heartland: both sides of the Strada Chiantigiana, or SR222, are embraced by glorious panoramic views of vineyards, olive groves, and castle towers. Traveling south from Florence, you first reach the aptly named one-street-town of Strada in Chianti. Farther south, the number of vineyards on either side of the road dramatically increases—as do the signs inviting you in for a free tasting of wine. Beyond Strada lies Greve in Chianti, completely surrounded by wineries and filled with wineshops. There's art to be had as well: Passignano, west of Greve, has an abbey that shelters a 15th-century *Last Supper* by Domenico and Davide Ghirlandaio. Farther still, along the Strada Chiantigiana, are Panzano and Castellina in Chianti, both hill towns. It's from near Panzano and Castellina that branch roads head to the other main towns of eastern Chianti: Radda in Chianti, Gaiole in Chianti, and Castelnuovo Berardenga.

The Strada Chiantigiana gets crowded during the high season, but no one is in a hurry. The slow pace gives you time to soak up the beautiful scenery.

### Greve in Chianti

*40 km (25 miles) north of Siena, 28 km (17½ miles) south of Florence.*

If there is a capital of Chianti, it is Greve, a friendly market town with no shortage of cafés, *enoteche* (wine bars), and crafts shops lining its streets.

#### **GETTING HERE**

Driving from Florence or Siena, Greve is easily reached via the Strada Chiantigiana (SR222). SITA buses travel frequently between Florence and Greve. Tra-In and SITA buses connect Siena and Greve, but a direct trip is virtually impossible. There is no train service to Greve.

Central Tuscany, Past and Present S

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It may be hard to imagine that much of central Tuscany was once the battleground of warring Sienese and Florentine armies, but until Florence finally defeated Siena in 1555, the enchanting walled cities of this gentle area were strategic-defensive outposts in a series of seemingly never-ending wars.

Since the 1960s many British and northern Europeans have relocated here: they've been drawn to the unhurried life, balmy climate, and old villages. They've bought and restored farmhouses, many given up by the young heirs who decided not to continue life on the farm and instead found work in cities. There are so many Britons, in fact, that the area has been nicknamed Chiantishire. But don't let this be a deterrent to a visit: the whole area still proudly exerts its strongly Tuscan character.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS Greve in Chianti Tourism Office.** ✉ *Piazza Matteotti 10* 📞  
055/8546299.

## S Sights

### Castello di Verrazzano

**CASTLE/PALACE** | Tours here take you down to the cellars, through the gardens, and into the woods in search of wild boar. ✉ *Via S. Martino in Valle 12* 📞 055/854243 🌐 [www.verrazzano.com](http://www.verrazzano.com).

### Chiesa di San Donato a Lamole

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | The tiny village of Lamole contains this Romanesque church that was greatly modified in 1860; the only remnant of its earlier incarnation can be found in its simple facade. Inside is a 14th-century altarpiece, as well as a curious side chapel on the right that is decorated with rather garish 20th-century religious works. From Greve in Chianti, drive south on SR222 for about 1 km (½ mile); take a left and follow signs for Lamole. It's about 10 km (6 miles) southeast of Greve. ✉ *Località Lamole in Chianti 1.*

### Montefioralle

**TOWN** | A tiny hilltop hamlet, about 2 km (1 mile) west of Greve in Chianti, Montefioralle is the ancestral home of Amerigo Vespucci (1454–1512), the mapmaker, navigator, and explorer who named America. (His niece Simonetta may have been the inspiration for Sandro Botticelli’s *Birth of Venus*, painted sometime in the 1480s.) ☒ *Greve in Chianti*.

### **Piazza Matteotti**

**PLAZA** | Greve’s gently sloping and asymmetrical central piazza is surrounded by an attractive arcade with shops of all kinds. In the center stands a statue of the discoverer of New York harbor, Giovanni da Verrazzano (circa 1480–1527). Check out the lively market held here on Saturday morning. ☒ *Greve in Chianti*.

## **r Restaurants**

### **Da Padellina**

\$ | **TUSCAN** | Locals don’t flock to this restaurant on the outskirts of Strada in Chianti for the art on the walls, some of it questionable, most of it kitsch, but instead for the bistecca fiorentina. As big as a breadboard and served rare, one of these justly renowned steaks is enough to feed a family of four, with doggy bags willingly provided if required. **Known for:** great grilled meats; unpretentious local choice; large, diverse wine list. ☑ *Average main: €10* ☒ *Via Corso del Popolo 54, 10 km (6 miles) north of Greve* ☎ *055/858388* ⌵ *Closed Thurs.*

### **Enoteca Fuoripiazza**

\$ | **TUSCAN** | Detour off Greve’s flower-strewn main square for food that relies heavily on local ingredients (like cheese and salami produced nearby). The lengthy wine list provides a bewildering array of choices to pair with *affettati misti* (cured meats) or one of their primi—the *pici* (a thick, short noodle) are deftly prepared here. **Known for:** alfresco dining; local cheese and salami; attentively prepared food. ☑ *Average main: €14* ☒ *Via I Maggio 2* ☎ *055/8546313* 🌐 [www.enotecafuoripiazza.it](http://www.enotecafuoripiazza.it) ⌵ *Closed Mon.*

### **Ristoro di Lamole**

\$\$ | TUSCAN | Up a winding road lined with olive trees and vineyards, this place is worth the effort it takes to find. The view from the outdoor terrace is divine, as is the simple, exquisitely prepared Tuscan cuisine: start with the bruschetta drizzled with olive oil or the sublime *verdure sott'olio* (marinated vegetables) before moving on to any of the fine secondi. **Known for:** coniglio (rabbit) is a specialty; sweeping view from the terrace; your hosts Paolo and Filippo. ☎ Average main: €19 ✉ Via di Lamole 6, Località Lamole ☎ 055/8547050 🌐 [www.ristorodilamole.it](http://www.ristorodilamole.it) 🕒 Closed Wed., and Nov.–Apr.

## h Hotels

### Albergo del Chianti

\$\$ | B&B/INN | Simple but pleasantly decorated bedrooms with plain modern cabinets and wardrobes and wrought-iron beds have views of the town square or out over the tile rooftops toward the surrounding hills. **Pros:** central location; best value in Greve; swimming pool. **Cons:** rooms facing the piazza can be noisy; small bathrooms; remote: a car is a necessity. ☎ Rooms from: €125 ✉ Piazza Matteotti 86 ☎ 055/853763 🌐 [www.albergodelchianti.it](http://www.albergodelchianti.it) 🕒 Closed Jan.–beginning Mar. 🛏 21 rooms 🍳 Free breakfast.

### Castello Vicchiomaggio

\$\$ | B&B/INN | FAMILY | Stay in a fortified castle built more than a millennium ago (and rebuilt during the Renaissance). **Pros:** spacious rooms; spectacular views; very helpful staff. **Cons:** some rooms lack a/c; you need a car to get around; restaurant is inconsistent. ☎ Rooms from: €168 ✉ Via Vicchiomaggio 4, Località Vicchiomaggio ☎ 055/854079 🌐 [www.vicchiomaggio.it](http://www.vicchiomaggio.it) 🛏 16 rooms 🍳 Free breakfast.

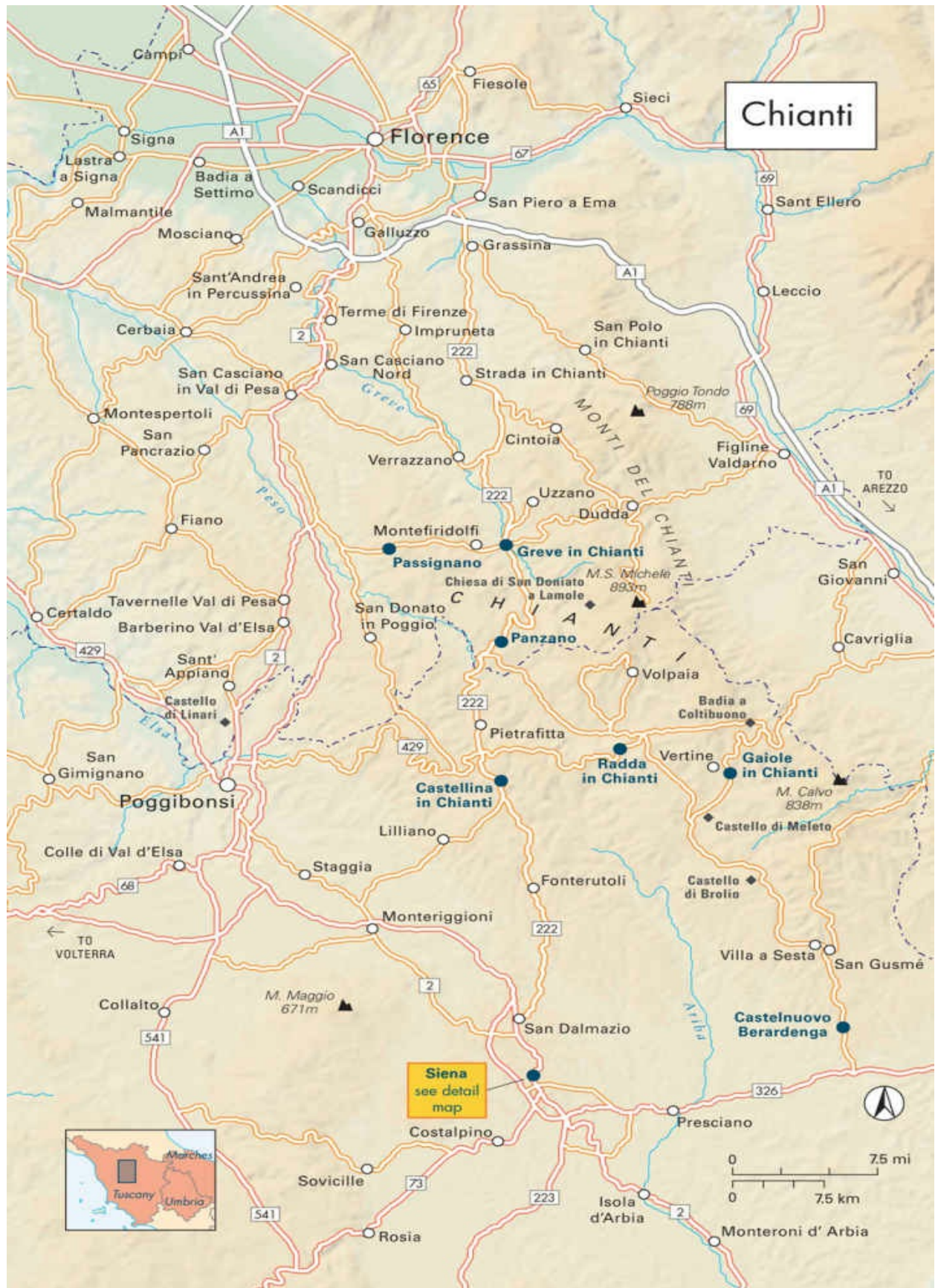
### ★ Villa Bordoni

\$\$\$ | B&B/INN | Scottish expats David and Catherine Gardner transformed a ramshackle 16th-century villa into a stunning retreat where no two rooms are alike—all have stenciled walls; some have four-poster beds, others small mezzanines. **Pros:** splendidly isolated in the hills above Greve; beautiful decor; wonderful hosts. **Cons:** on a long and bumpy dirt road; need a car to

get around; books up quickly. 💰 Rooms from: €210 ✉ Via San Cresci 31/32  
☎ 055/8546230 🌐 [www.villabordoni.com](http://www.villabordoni.com) 🕒 Closed Jan. and Feb. 🏠 11  
rooms 🍴🍷 Free breakfast.

### ★ Villa Il Poggiale

\$\$ | B&B/INN | Renaissance gardens, beautiful rooms with high ceilings and elegant furnishings, a panoramic pool, and expert staff are just a few of the things that make a stay at this 16th-century villa memorable. **Pros:** beautiful gardens and panoramic setting; elegant historical building; exceptionally professional staff. **Cons:** private transportation necessary; some rooms face a country road and may be noisy during the day; it may be too isolated for some. 💰 Rooms from: €170 ✉ Via Empolese 69, 20 km (12 miles) northwest of Greve, San Casciano Val di Pesa ☎ 055/828311 🌐 [www.villailpoggiale.it](http://www.villailpoggiale.it)  
🕒 Closed Jan. and Feb. 🏠 26 rooms 🍴🍷 Free breakfast.



## Eating Well in Central Tuscany I

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Chianti restaurants serve Tuscan dishes similar to those in Florence, but they also have local specialties, such as pasta creations made with *pici* (a long, thick, hand-rolled spaghetti). You'll find other pasta dishes, like *pappardelle alla lepre* (a long, flat type of pasta noodle with hare sauce), and soups, such as *pappa al pomodoro* (a thick tomato soup) and *ribollita* (Tuscan bread soup), on most menus.

*Panzanella*, a salad of tomato, basil, bread, and onion, is a common first course on summer menus.

The so-called *tonno del Chianti* (Chianti tuna) is really a dish of tender flakes of pork that looks and, believe it or not, tastes like tuna. Pecorino, a sheep's-milk cheese, makes it onto many menus in pasta dishes and appetizers.

The Sieneese often add a subtle flair of extra herbs and garlic to their rendition of traditional Tuscan fare. Antipasti (usually made of the simplest ingredients) are extremely satisfying.

A typical starter might be a plate of excellent locally cured meats, such as those made from *cinta senese*, a species of domestic pig rescued from near extinction. *Verdure sott'olio* (marinated vegetables) are usually artichokes, red peppers, carrots, celery, cauliflower, olives, and capers marinated in olive oil. Second courses are traditionally game meats, and *piccione* (pigeon), served either roasted or stuffed and baked, is commonly on the menu.

After your meal, try some delicious amber-color *vin santo*, a sweet dessert wine with *cantuccini* (hard almond cookies), which are dunked once or twice in the glass. The wine is made from choice white Trebbiano Toscano or Malvasia del Chianti grapes and is aged in small, partially filled oak barrels. Other favorite Sieneese sweets include *ricciarelli*, succulent almond-flavored cookies.

Excellent extra-virgin olive oil is produced throughout the region, and the best way to taste it is in the form of a *fettunta* (oily slice), a thick slice of toasted Tuscan bread rubbed with garlic, sprinkled with salt, and dripping with olive oil. Asking for a plate or bowl to sample olive oil with bread before a meal is a dead giveaway that you're a tourist—it's the invention of American restaurateurs.



## Villa Vignamaggio

\$\$ | B&B/INN | Reputed to be the birthplace of Lisa Gherardini (1479–1542), who may be the subject of Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, Villa Vignamaggio has origins in the 14th century. **Pros:** unbeatable views; informative wine tastings; attentive staff. **Cons:** no elevator to third floor; private transportation required; two-night minimum stay. [D] Rooms from: €170 [E] Via Petriolo 5 [F] 055/854661 [G] [www.vignamaggio.com](http://www.vignamaggio.com) [H] Closed mid-Nov.–mid-Mar. [I] 15 rooms [J] Free breakfast.

## Passignano

8 km (5 miles) south of Mercatale, 29 km (18 miles) south of Florence.

Other than its Romanesque abbey and the few houses clustered around it, there is very little to actually see in this tiny hamlet. But the panoramic setting and the beautiful natural surroundings do make a short side trip recommendable.

### GETTING HERE

By car, take the Tavernelle exit from the Florence–Siena Superstrada. Direct bus or train service is not available.

## S Sights

### Badia a Passignano (Abbey of Passignano)

RELIGIOUS SITE | The dining hall of the towering 11th-century Abbey of Passignano houses a stunningly massive, 21-foot-wide *Last Supper* (1476) by Domenico and Davide Ghirlandaio, and the monastery's church has a 13th-century sculpture of St. Michael slaying the dragon. [E] Via Passignano 20, Tavarnelle Val di Pesa [F] 055/8071171 [H] Closed Sun. and Thurs.

## r Restaurants

## La Cantinetta di Rignana

\$ | ITALIAN | On Sunday afternoon this old-fashioned farmhouse-esque trattoria is teeming with lively Italian families. Grilled meats are the specialty of the house, and if you have room for dessert, the kitchen whips up a mean tiramisu. **Known for:** its bistecca fiorentina; generous portions; dine in the garden overlooking the vineyards. 💰 *Average main: €13* ✉ *Via di Rignana 15, Greve in Chianti* ☎ *055/852601* 🌐 [www.lacantinettadirignana.it](http://www.lacantinettadirignana.it) 🕒 *Closed Tues.*

## ★ Osteria di Passignano

\$\$\$ | ITALIAN | In an ancient wine cellar owned by the Antinori family—who also happen to own much of what you see in the area—is a sophisticated restaurant ably run by chef Marcello Crini and his attentive staff. The menu changes seasonally; traditional Tuscan cuisine is given a delightful twist through the use of unexpected herbs. **Known for:** dedication to local products; extensive wine list with local and international vintages; daylong cooking courses. 💰 *Average main: €35* ✉ *Via Passignano 33, Badia a Passignano, Tavarnelle Val di Pesa* ☎ *055/8071278* 🌐 [www.osteriadipassignano.com](http://www.osteriadipassignano.com) 🕒 *Closed Sun., 3 wks in Jan., and 1 wk in Aug.*

## Panzano

*7 km (4½ miles) south of Greve in Chianti, 36 km (22 miles) south of Florence.*

The magnificent views of the valleys of the Pesa and Greve rivers easily make Panzano one of the prettiest stops in Chianti. The triangular Piazza Bucciarelli is the heart of the new town. A short stroll along Via Giovanni da Verrazzano brings you up to the old town, Panzano Alto, which is still partly surrounded by medieval walls. The town's 13th-century castle is now almost completely absorbed by later buildings (its central tower is now a private home).

## GETTING HERE

From Florence or Siena, Panzano is easily reached by car along the Strada Chiantigiana (SR222). SITA buses travel frequently between Florence and

Panzano. From Siena, the journey by bus is extremely difficult because SITA and Tra-In do not coordinate their schedules. There is no train service to Panzano.

## S Sights

### San Leolino

**BUILDING** | Ancient even by Chianti standards, this hilltop church probably dates from the 10th century, but was completely rebuilt in the Romanesque style sometime in the 13th century. It has a 14th-century cloister worth seeing. The 16th-century terracotta tabernacles are attributed to Giovanni della Robbia, and there's also a remarkable triptych (attributed to the Master of Panzano) that was executed sometime in the mid-14th century. Open days and hours are unpredictable; check with the tourist office in Greve in Chianti for the latest. ✉ *Località San Leolino, 3 km (2 miles) south of Panzano.*

## Dario Cecchini

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By trade, Dario Cecchini is a butcher, but his restaurant Dario Doc is not your typical butcher shop. From its intimate confines at Via XX Luglio 11 in Panzano, he holds forth behind a counter teeming with luscious meats. Opera plays in the background; sometimes customers sing along. Dario quotes Dante as he offers up samples of his wares.

Dario calls himself *un' artigiano* (an artisan)—an indication of the pride he takes in his work. His shop has been in the family since the late 1700s, and his father trained Dario in the craft. “At 13,” he says, “my grandmother made me a butcher’s jacket. My mother began to cry. I guess she hoped I’d choose something else.”

Dario is perhaps the world’s greatest devotee of *bistecca fiorentina*, the definitive Tuscan steak. To get one of his *bistecche*, you must request it seven days in advance. Ask him to halve its width, and you will incur this genial man’s scorn. About its preparation, Dario brooks no compromises. “It must be very thick, seared on both sides, and very, very rare in the middle.” If you prefer your steak well done? “You shouldn’t order it.” This is not to say that Dario is an unwavering

traditionalist. One of his prized creations is sushi del Chianti, which took him five years to develop. After a taste of the coarsely ground raw beef, it can be difficult to stop eating.

What wine does Dario pair with his bistecca? “A young, simple, unstructured Chianti.” If— heaven forbid—such a Chianti is not on the wine list, “Any young, honest red will do—no dallying in oak casks. Anything disliked by the *Wine Spectator*.”

## Santa Maria Assunta

RELIGIOUS SITE | Situated next to the castle in the upper part of town, this church was completely rebuilt in the 19th century. In the small chapel to the right of the nave is an Annunciation attributed to Michele di Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio (1503–77). ✉ *Via Castellana 6*.

## 🍴 Restaurants





### ★ Dario Doc

\$\$ | ITALIAN | FAMILY | Local butcher and restaurateur Dario Cecchini has extended his empire of meat to include this space located directly above his butcher’s shop. Here, you’ll find only four items on the menu: the Dario DOC, a half-pound burger, without bun, served with roasted potatoes and onions; the Super Dario, the former with salad and beans added; the Welcome, with four different dishes of beef and pork served with fresh garden vegetables; and a vegetarian dish. **Known for:** the best burger in Italy; performing waitstaff; enormously popular, especially in summer. 💰 *Average main: €15* ✉ *Via XX Luglio 11* ☎ *055/852020* 🌐 [www.dariocecchini.com](http://www.dariocecchini.com) 🕒 *Closed Sun.*

### Enoteca Baldi








\$ | WINE BAR | Sample the local *vino* while satisfying your appetite with simply prepared and presented bruschetta, soups, and pastas. In summer a few tables are set in the shade under the trees in the town’s main square. **Known for:** fine wine list; fun atmosphere; great staff. 💰 *Average main: €10* ✉ *Piazza Bucciarelli 26* ☎ *055/852843* 🕒 *Closed Tues.*

### Solociccia








\$\$\$ | TUSCAN | This restaurant is the creation of Dario Cecchini, Panzano's local merchant of meat. Served at communal tables, there are three set meals to choose from, all of which highlight meat dishes chosen at Dario's discretion, and all are accompanied by seasonal vegetables, white beans with olive oil, focaccia bread, and a ¼ liter of wine. **Known for:** choice of three set menus with everything but steak; fun communal tables; party atmosphere.  *Average main: €30*  *Via Chiantigiana 5*  *055/852020*  [www.dariocecchini.com](http://www.dariocecchini.com).

## h Hotels

### ★ Villa Le Barone

\$\$\$ | B&B/INN | Once the home of the Viviani della Robbia family, this 16th-century villa in a grove of ancient cypress trees retains many aspects of a private country dwelling, complete with homey guest quarters. **Pros:** beautiful location; wonderful restaurant; great base for exploring the region. **Cons:** some rooms are a bit small; 15-minute walk to nearest town; a car is a must.  *Rooms from: €209*  *Via San Leolino 19*  *055/852621*  [www.villalebarone.com](http://www.villalebarone.com)  *Closed Nov.–Easter*  *28 rooms*  *Free breakfast*.

### Villa Sangiovese

\$ | B&B/INN | On the town's main square, this simple, well-run hotel has rooms that look out to the hillside or face the piazza. **Pros:** immaculate rooms; pool area great for kids; great location for exploring Chianti. **Cons:** front rooms can be noisy; lots of stairs; pool area can be noisy.  *Rooms from: €110*  *Piazza Bucciarelli 5*  *055/852461*  [www.villasangiovese.it](http://www.villasangiovese.it)  *Closed Oct.–May*  *19 rooms*  *Free breakfast*.

## b Shopping

### Antica Macelleria Cecchini

FOOD/CANDY | This just might be the world's most dramatic butcher shop. Here, amid classical music and lively conversation, owner Dario Cecchini

holds court: while quoting Dante, he serves samples of his very fine *sushi di Chianina* (raw slices of Chianina beef gently salted and peppered). He has researched recipes from the 15th century, and sells pâtés and herb concoctions found nowhere else. Serious food enthusiasts should not miss the place. ✉ *Via XX Luglio 11* ☎ 055/852020 🌐 [www.dariocecchini.com](http://www.dariocecchini.com).

## Castellina in Chianti

*13 km (8 miles) south of Panzano, 59 km (35 miles) south of Florence, 22 km (14 miles) north of Siena.*

Castellina in Chianti—or simply Castellina—is on a ridge above three valleys: the Val di Pesa, Val d’Arbia, and Val d’Elsa. No matter what direction you turn, the panorama is bucolic. The strong 15th-century medieval walls and fortified town gate give a hint of the history of this village, which was an outpost during the continuing wars between Florence and Siena. In the main square, the Piazza del Comune, there’s a 15th-century palace and a 15th-century fort constructed around a 13th-century tower. It now serves as the town hall.

### GETTING HERE

As with all the towns along the Strada Chiantigiana (SR222), Castellina is an easy drive from either Siena or Florence. From Siena, Castellina is well served by the local Tra-In bus company. However, only one bus a day travels here from Florence. The closest train station is at Castellina Scalo, some 15 km (9 miles) away.

### VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS** [Castellina in Chianti Tourism Office](#). ✉ *Via Ferruccio 40* ☎ 0577/741392.

## S Sights

### Castello di Fonterutoli

CASTLE/PALACE | Three different wine tours are on offer here, including one

that involves some very good food. In the capable hands of the Mazzei family since the 11th century, this gorgeous estate is a perfect place to taste some very fine wines. ✉ *Castellina in Chianti* ☎ 0577/73571 🌐 [www.fonterutoli.it](http://www.fonterutoli.it).

## Rocca delle Macie

WINERY/DISTILLERY | Family-run and -operated, you can do a simple wine tasting, or taste while eating lunch or dinner at the rather fine restaurant. It's also possible to stay on the estate in restored farmhouses. ✉ *Località Le Macie 45* ☎ 0577/732236 🌐 [www.roccadellemacie.com](http://www.roccadellemacie.com).

# r Restaurants

## Albergaccio

\$\$\$ | TUSCAN | The fact that the dining room can seat only 35 guests makes a meal here an intimate experience, and the ever-changing menu mixes traditional and creative dishes. In late September and October *zuppa di funghi e castagne* (mushroom and chestnut soup) is a treat; grilled meats and seafood are on the list throughout the year. **Known for:** creative menu; superb wine list; marvelous waitstaff. 💰 *Average main: €25* ✉ *Via Fiorentina 63* ☎ 0577/741042 🌐 [www.albergacciocast.com](http://www.albergacciocast.com) 🕒 *Closed Sun.*

## Osteria alla Piazza

\$\$ | ITALIAN | Relax amid vineyards on a countryside terrace with one of Chianti's most spectacular views of the vineyards in the valley of the River Pesa. Enjoy the sophisticated menu, which pairs perfectly with the wine list (many of its selections are from what's growing around you). **Known for:** beautiful views; gracious service; inventive menu. 💰 *Average main: €20* ✉ *Località La Piazza* ☎ 331/9267403 🌐 [www.osteriaallapiazza.com](http://www.osteriaallapiazza.com) 🕒 *Closed Mon., and Jan. and Feb.; closed weekdays Mar., Nov., and Dec.*

## Ristorante Le Tre Porte

\$\$ | TUSCAN | Grilled meat dishes are the specialty at this popular restaurant, with a bistecca fiorentina (served very rare, as always) taking pride of place; paired with grilled fresh porcini mushrooms when in season (spring and fall),

it's a heady dish. The panoramic terrace is a good choice for dining in summer. **Known for:** views from the terrace; their way with mushrooms; fine wine list with lots of local bottles. [🇺🇸] *Average main: €15* ✉ *Via Trento e Trieste 4* 📞 0577/741163 🌐 [www.treporte.com](http://www.treporte.com).

### Sotto Le Volte

\$\$ | TUSCAN | As the name suggests, you'll find this small restaurant under the arches of Castellina's medieval walkway, and the eatery's vaulted ceilings make for a particularly romantic setting. The menu is short and eminently Tuscan, with typical soups and pasta dishes. **Known for:** unique setting; flair for Tuscan classics; attentive waitstaff. [🇺🇸] *Average main: €15* ✉ *Via delle Volte 14–16* 📞 0577/741299 🌐 [www.ristorantesottolevolte.it](http://www.ristorantesottolevolte.it) 🕒 Closed Wed., and Jan.–Mar.

## h Hotels

### Colle Etrusco Salivolpi

\$\$ | B&B/INN | The family that owns this farmhouse took special care not to change too much when they began accepting guests: faded family photos, mementos of long-past journeys, and bric-a-brac of all kinds decorate the common areas, while each room is simply furnished with antiques that are typical of the late 18th and early 19th centuries in Chianti—heavy wooden wardrobes, marble-top chests, and woven straw-seat chairs. **Pros:** tranquil location; large pool with valley views; beautiful garden. **Cons:** some stairs to climb; a car is a must; books up quickly. [🇺🇸] *Rooms from: €143* ✉ *Via Fiorentina 89* 📞 0577/740484 🌐 [www.hotelsalivolpi.com](http://www.hotelsalivolpi.com) 🕒 Closed Jan. 7–Easter ➡ 19 rooms 🕒 Free breakfast.

### Hotel Belvedere di San Leonino

\$\$ | B&B/INN | FAMILY | Stroll around the wonderful gardens on this restored country estate dating from the 14th century. **Pros:** great family atmosphere; lovely old house; central location. **Cons:** stairs to climb; need a car to get around; expensive breakfast. [🇺🇸] *Rooms from: €130* ✉ *Località San Leonino* 📞 0577/740887 🌐 [www.hotelsanleonino.com](http://www.hotelsanleonino.com) 🕒 Closed mid-Nov.–mid-Apr. ➡ 28 rooms 🕒 No meals.



## Locanda Le Piazze

\$\$\$ | B&B/INN | This old farmhouse has been transformed into a marvelous hotel in the midst of vineyards. **Pros:** pastoral setting; fun cooking classes; luxurious bathrooms. **Cons:** children under 14 not welcome; need a car to get around; hosts weddings. 💰 Rooms from: €235 ✉ Località Le Piazze 41 ☎ 0577/743190 🌐 [www.locandalepiazze.it](http://www.locandalepiazze.it) 🕒 Closed Nov.–Apr. 🏠 20 rooms 🍴🍷 Free breakfast.

## ★ Palazzo Squarcialupi

\$\$ | B&B/INN | In this lovely 15th-century palace, spacious rooms have high ceilings, tile floors, and 18th-century furnishings, and many have views of the valley below. **Pros:** great location in town center; elegant public spaces; nice spa, pool, and grounds. **Cons:** on a street with no car access; across from a busy restaurant; rooms facing the street can experience some noise. 💰 Rooms from: €138 ✉ Via Ferruccio 22 ☎ 0577/741186 🌐 [www.squarcialupirelaxinchianti.com](http://www.squarcialupirelaxinchianti.com) 🕒 Closed Nov.–Mar. 🏠 17 rooms 🍴🍷 Free breakfast.

# b Shopping

Castellina is a small town, with most of its shops located either along Via Ferruccio or on the Piazza del Comune. But don't miss the specialty stores hidden away on Via delle Volte, which runs inside the eastern medieval walls of the town—you can reach it from either end of Via Ferruccio.

## La Bottega

GIFTS/SOUVENIRS | Mario Cappelletti carries interesting prints and reproductions of well-known Renaissance artworks, as well as contemporary paintings of the Tuscan countryside. ✉ Via Ferruccio 34/36 ☎ 0577/740980 🌐 [www.tuscanantiques.com](http://www.tuscanantiques.com).

## Le Volte Enoteca

WINE/SPIRITS | On Castellina's main street, Aleandro and Gilles stock an ample and well-chosen supply of local wines produced by small estates. On request, they can also organize visits to nearby wineries. ✉ Via Ferruccio 12

☎ 0577/740308 🌐 [www.enotecalevolte.com](http://www.enotecalevolte.com).

## Lucia Volontieri

FOOD/CANDY | You'll find a delightful selection of delicately hand-painted ceramics in Lucia's studio and shop near the center of Castellina. ✉ *Via Trento e Trieste 24* ☎ 0577/741133 🌐 [www.luciavolontieri.com](http://www.luciavolontieri.com).

## Radda in Chianti

10 km (6 miles) east of Castellina in Chianti, 55 km (34 miles) south of Florence.

Radda in Chianti sits on a ridge stretching between the Val di Pesa and Val d'Arbia. It is easily reached by following the SR429 from Castellina. It's another one of those tiny villages with steep streets for strolling; follow the signs that point you toward the *camminamento medioevale*, a covered 14th-century walkway that circles part of the city inside the walls.

### GETTING HERE

Radda can be reached by car from either Siena or Florence along the SR222 (Strada Chiantigiana), and from the A1 highway. Three Tra-In buses make their way from Siena to Radda. One morning SITA bus travels from Florence to Radda. There is no train service convenient to Radda.

### VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS Radda in Chianti Tourism Office.** ✉ *Piazza Castello 6* ☎ 0577/738494.

## S Sights

### Castello di Volpaia

CASTLE/PALACE | At this small enoteca on Piazza della Cisterna you can sample and purchase the fine wines, olive oil, and flavored vinegars made by Castello di Volpaia. Booked in advance, tours in English of the winery and olive press are also available. ✉ *Piazza della Cisterna 1* 🌐 [www.volpaia.it](http://www.volpaia.it).

## Palazzo del Podestà

**GOVERNMENT BUILDING** | Radda's town hall (aka Palazzo Comunale), in the middle of town, was built in the second half of the 14th century and has served the same function ever since. Fifty-one coats of arms (the largest is the Medici's) are imbedded in the facade, representing the past governors of the town, but unless you have official business, the building is closed to the public. ✉ *Piazza Ferrucci 1.*

## Volpaia

**TOWN** | This tiny town, with a population of roughly 40, is perched on a hill 10 km (6 miles) north of Radda. During the wars between Florence and Siena it served as a key castle and military outpost, but lost its importance when the Florentines defeated Siena in 1555. Approximately three-quarters of the town are now given over to the production of wine and olive oil. ✉ *Radda in Chianti.*

# r Restaurants

## Osteria Le Panzanelle

**\$** | **TUSCAN** | Silvia Bonechi's experience in the kitchen—with the help of a few precious recipes handed down from her grandmother—is one of the reasons for the success of this small restaurant in the tiny hamlet of Lucarelli; the other is the front-room hospitality of Nada Michelassi. These two *panzanelle* (women from Panzano) serve a short menu of tasty and authentic dishes at what the locals refer to as *il prezzo giusto* (the right price). **Known for:** fine home cooking; good wine list; unpretentious atmosphere. 💰  
*Average main: €14* ✉ *Località Lucarelli 29, 8 km (5 miles) northwest of Radda on the road to Panzano* ☎ *0577/733511* 🌐 [www.lepanzanelle.it](http://www.lepanzanelle.it) ⌵  
*Closed Mon., and Jan. and Feb.*

# h Hotels

## Il Borgo di Vescine

\$\$ | B&B/INN | At this former Etruscan settlement a series of low-slung medieval stone buildings with barrel-tile roofs are connected by cobbled paths and punctuated by cypress trees. **Pros:** set in a lovely park; cozy public rooms; tranquillity prevails. **Cons:** long walk to nearest town; isolated location; a car is a must. [D] Rooms from: €200 [✉] Località Vescine ↕5 km (3 miles) west of Radda in Chianti [☎] 0577/741144 [Globe] [www.vescine.it](http://www.vescine.it) [🕒] Closed Nov.–Apr., except at Christmas [🛏] 27 rooms [🍳] Free breakfast.

### La Bottega di Giovannino

\$ | B&B/INN | This is a fantastic place for the budget-conscious traveler, as rooms are immaculate and most have a stunning view of the surrounding hills. **Pros:** great location in the center of town; close to restaurants and shops; super value. **Cons:** some rooms are small; some bathrooms are down the hall; basic decor. [D] Rooms from: €60 [✉] Via Roma 6–8 [☎] 0577/735601 [Globe] [www.labottegadigiovannino.it](http://www.labottegadigiovannino.it) [🛏] 10 rooms [🍳] Free breakfast.

### ★ La Locanda

\$\$\$ | B&B/INN | At an altitude of more than 1,800 feet, this converted farmhouse is probably the loftiest luxury inn in Chianti. **Pros:** idyllic setting; panoramic views; wonderful host. **Cons:** on a very rough gravel access road; isolated location; need a car to get around. [D] Rooms from: €220 [✉] Località Montanino di Volpaia, off Via della Volpaia, 13 km (8 miles) northwest of Radda [☎] 0577/738833 [Globe] [www.lalocanda.it](http://www.lalocanda.it) [🕒] Closed mid-Oct.–mid-Apr. [🛏] 7 rooms [🍳] Free breakfast.

### Palazzo San Niccolò

\$ | HOTEL | The wood-beam ceilings, terracotta floors, and some of the original frescoes of a 19th-century town palace remain, but the marble bathrooms have all been updated, some with Jacuzzi tubs. **Pros:** central location; friendly staff; pool (though a car is necessary to get there). **Cons:** some rooms face a main street; room sizes vary; breakfast costs extra. [D] Rooms from: €104 [✉] Via Roma 16 [☎] 0577/735666 [Globe] [www.hotelsanniccolo.com](http://www.hotelsanniccolo.com) [🕒] Closed Nov.–Mar. [🛏] 18 rooms [🍳] Free breakfast.

### Podere Terreno

\$ | **HOTEL** | People come from all over the world to enjoy the quiet country life in this 16th-century farmhouse. **Pros:** historic setting; comfortable accommodations; great home-cooked meals. **Cons:** isolated location; need a car to get around; books up quickly. [D] Rooms from: €96 [✉] Via della Volpaia 5 km (3 mi) north of Radda in Chianti, Volpaia [☎] 0577/738312 [🌐] [www.podereterreno.it](http://www.podereterreno.it) [🕒] Closed Christmas wk [👉] 6 rooms [🍳] Free breakfast.

### ★ Relais Fattoria Vignale

\$ | **B&B/INN** | A refined and comfortable country house offers numerous sitting rooms with terracotta floors and attractive stonework, as well as wood-beamed guest rooms filled with simple wooden furnishings and handwoven rugs. **Pros:** intimate public spaces; excellent restaurant; nice grounds and pool. **Cons:** single rooms are small; annex across a busy road; a car is necessary. [D] Rooms from: €114 [✉] Via Pianigiani 9 [☎] 0577/738300 hotel, 0577/738094 restaurant [🌐] [www.vignale.it](http://www.vignale.it) [🕒] Closed Nov.–Mar. 15 [👉] 42 rooms [🍳] Free breakfast.

## b Shopping

### Studio Rampini

**CERAMICS/GLASSWARE** | This kiln and painting studio, 5 km (3 miles) south of Radda in Chianti, produces exquisite (and expensive) hand-painted ceramic objects, including plates, bowls, and candlesticks. The firm ships anywhere in the world and keeps its customers' information on file. If you break a plate or want to buy more, they'll know exactly what your pattern is. [✉] Località Casa Beretone di Vistarenni [☎] 0577/738043 [🌐] [www.rampiniceramics.com](http://www.rampiniceramics.com).

### Tecno-Casa

**HOUSEHOLD ITEMS/FURNITURE** | Locals come here to buy their nuts, bolts, and small tools, but visitors will also find a surprisingly varied assortment of traditional Italian household items, including coffeemakers and cups, wine decanters, and decorative bottle stoppers. [✉] Via Roma 20/22 [☎] 0577/738613.

## Gaiole in Chianti

9 km (5½ miles) southeast of Radda in Chianti, 69 km (43 miles) south of Florence.

A market town since 1200, Gaiole is now a central destination for touring southern Chianti. A stream runs through its center, and flowers adorn many of its window boxes. The surrounding area is dotted with castles perched on hilltops (the better to see the approaching enemy): they were of great strategic importance during the Renaissance, and still make dazzling lookout points.

### GETTING HERE

To get here by car from the A1, take the Val d'Arno exit and follow signs for Gaiole on the SR408. Gaiole is relatively well connected to Siena by Tra-In buses, but cannot be reached by train.

## S Sights

### **Badia a Coltibuono** (*Abbey of the Good Harvest*)

**CITY PARK** | This Romanesque abbey has been owned by Lorenza de' Medici's family for more than a century and a half (the family isn't closely related to the Florentine Medici). Wine has been produced here since the abbey was founded by Vallombrosan monks in the 11th century. Today the family continues the tradition, making wines, cold-pressed olive oil, and various flavored vinegars. Don't miss the jasmine-draped courtyard and the inner cloister with its antique well. ✉ *Località Badia a Coltibuono, 4 km (2½ miles) north of Gaiole* ☎ 0577/74481 tours 🌐 [www.coltibuono.com](http://www.coltibuono.com) 🏠 Abbey €7 🕒 Closed Jan. 7–mid-Mar.

### ★ **Castello di Brolio**

**BUILDING** | If you have time for only one castle in Tuscany, this is it. At the end of the 12th century, when Florence conquered southern Chianti, Brolio became Florence's southernmost outpost, and it was often said, "When Brolio grows, all Siena trembles." Brolio was built about AD 1000 and owned by the monks of the Badia Fiorentina; the "new" owners, the Ricasoli family, have been in possession since 1141. Bettino Ricasoli (1809–80), the

so-called Iron Baron, was one of the founders of modern Italy, and is said to have invented the original formula for Chianti wine. Brolio, one of Chianti's best-known labels, is still justifiably famous. The grounds are worth visiting, even though the 19th-century manor house is not open to the public. The entrance fee includes a wine tasting in the enoteca. A small museum, where the Ricasoli Collection is housed in a 12th-century tower, displays objects that relate the long history of the family and the origins of Chianti wine. There are two apartments here available for rent by the week. ✉ *Località Madonna a Brolio, 2 km (1 mile) southeast of Gaiole* ☎ 0577/730280 🌐 [www.ricasoli.it](http://www.ricasoli.it) 🏠 €5 gardens 🕒 Closed Nov.–mid-Mar.

### Castello di Meleto

**CASTLE/PALACE** | It's a pretty drive up winding and curving roads to this 13th-century fortress. Attached is an 18th-century villa; a wineshop serves tastes of the locally produced wine as well as honeys and jams. It's worth visiting the castle, which is possible by guided-tour only (reservations required), to get a sense of how 18th-century aristocrats lived; if that doesn't interest you, proceed directly to the enoteca for a tasting. Apartments clustered near the castle are available for rent. ✉ *Località Meleto, 5 km (3 miles) south of Gaiole* ☎ 0577/749217 castle, 0577/749129 enoteca 🌐 [www.castellomeleto.it](http://www.castellomeleto.it) 🏠 €15.

### Vertine

**TOWN** | Dating back to the 10th century, this walled town is oval in shape and has a tall watchtower guarding the entrance gate. A walk along the still unspoiled streets gives you a glimpse of life in a Tuscan hill town as it once was, and the views of the undulating countryside from the occasional opening in the walls are simply spectacular. ✉ *Località Vertine, 2 km (1 mile) west of Gaiole.*

## 🍴 Restaurants

### Badia a Coltibuono

\$\$ | **ITALIAN** | Outside the walls of Badia a Coltibuono is the abbey's pleasant restaurant, with seating on a terrace teeming with flowers or in soft-yellow

rooms divided by ancient brick arches. The menu is schooled in Tuscan flavors, but has twists and flights of fantasy. **Known for:** its use of seasonal ingredients; the wine list, sourced mostly from their own backyard; gracious waitstaff. [💰] *Average main: €16* [✉] *Località Badia a Coltibuono, 4 km (2½ miles) north of Gaiole* [☎] 0577/749031 [🌐] [www.coltibuono.com](http://www.coltibuono.com) [🕒] *Closed Mon., and Nov.–Feb.*

### La Grotta della Rana

\$\$ | ITALIAN | A perfect stop for lunch while exploring the region's wineries, this trattoria offers *cucina casalinga* (home cooking) that can be eaten in the dining room or on a lovely outdoor patio. If you time dinner right, you might get to watch a memorable sunset. **Known for:** outstanding primi; succulent grilled meats. [💰] *Average main: €15* [✉] *Località San Sano 32/33 ↕8 km (5 miles) south of Gaiole* [☎] 0577/746020 [🌐] [www.lagrottadellarana.it](http://www.lagrottadellarana.it) [🕒] *Closed Wed., and Feb.–mid-Mar.*

### Lo Sfizio di Bianchi

\$ | ITALIAN | A pleasant restaurant with outdoor seating on Gaiole's main square, this spot is as popular with the locals as it is with travelers. The menu, presented on small blackboards, has the occasional unexpected item, like the plate of perfectly grilled vegetables that is listed as an antipasto but practically a meal in itself. **Known for:** loved by locals; honest Tuscan food without frills; delicious grilled meats. [💰] *Average main: €14* [✉] *Via Ricasoli 44/46* [☎] 0577/749501 [🌐] [www.losfiziobianchi.it](http://www.losfiziobianchi.it) [🕒] *Closed Wed.*

## h Hotels

### ★ Borgo Argenina

\$\$ | B&B/INN | Elena Nappa, a former interior designer, is now the consummate hostess at this centuries-old villa, which has old-fashioned guest rooms that are lovingly decorated with antique quilts and handmade wood furnishings yet modern appliances. **Pros:** homemade buffet breakfasts; off-the-beaten-path feel; two highly affable canines on-site. **Cons:** no pool; need a car to get around; three-night minimum stay. [💰] *Rooms from: €170* [✉] *Località Borgo Argenina, 15 km (9 miles) south of Gaiole* [☎] 345/3537673 [🌐]



[www.borgoargenina.it](http://www.borgoargenina.it) 📄 Closed mid-Nov.–Easter ➡ 7 rooms, 3 houses 📧  
Free breakfast.

### ★ **Castello di Spaltenna**

\$\$\$ | B&B/INN | This rustic yet elegant lodging includes a former convent (dating to the 1300s) and a Romanesque church; inside you'll find rooms with canopy beds, chiseled-stone fireplaces, and massage-jet tubs (in suites). **Pros:** excellent service; first-class restaurant on site; views of hills, woods, and vineyards. **Cons:** some rooms are reached via narrow stairways; some rooms look over the interior courtyard; a car is a necessity. 📄 Rooms from: €260 📧 Pieve di Spaltenna 13 📞 0577/749483 🌐 [www.spaltenna.it](http://www.spaltenna.it) 📄 Closed Nov.–Easter ➡ 37 rooms 📧 Free breakfast.

### **Hotel Residence San Sano**

\$\$ | B&B/INN | An open-hearth fireplace and hand-hewn stone porticoes hark back to the 13th century, when this was a fortress. **Pros:** good base for exploring Chianti; great family atmosphere; warm and friendly hosts. **Cons:** need a car to get around; furnishings, in true Tuscan style, are very plain; books up quickly. 📄 Rooms from: €140 📧 Località San Sano 21, 10 km (6 miles) south of Gaiole 📞 0577/1698022 🌐 [www.sansanohotel.it](http://www.sansanohotel.it) 📄 Closed Jan. and Feb. ➡ 16 rooms 📧 Free breakfast.

## Castelnuovo Berardenga

20 km (12 miles) southeast of Gaiole in Chianti, 90 km (56 miles) southeast of Florence, 23 km (14 miles) east of Siena.

The southernmost village in Chianti has a compact center with hilly, curving streets. A plethora of piazzas invite wandering.

### **GETTING HERE**

Castelnuovo is easily reached by car from Siena via the SS73. Tra-In buses run infrequently from Siena. Castelnuovo's train station, Castelnuovo Berardenga Scalo, is 8 km (5 miles) away.

### **VISITOR INFORMATION**

**CONTACTS** **Castelnuovo Berardenga tourism office.** 📧 Via del Chianti

60/65 📞 0577/351335 🌐 [www.terresiena.it](http://www.terresiena.it).

## S Sights

### San Giusto e San Clemente

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | Built in the 1840s on a Greek-cross plan, this Neoclassical church contains a Madonna and Child with angels by an anonymous 15th-century master. Also inside is the *Holy Family with St. Catherine of Siena*, attributed to Arcangelo Salimbeni (1530/40–79). ✉ *Piazza Matteotti 4.*

### San Gusmè

**TOWN** | The oldest and most interesting of the hilltop medieval towns that surround Castelnuovo Berardenga, this village still retains its early 1400s layout, with arched passageways, gates topped with coats of arms, narrow squares, and steep streets. You can walk through the entire village in 20 minutes, but in those 20 minutes you may feel as if you have stepped back in time some 600 years. ✉ *SR484 5 km (3 miles) north of Castelnuovo Berardenga.*








### Villa Chigi

**GARDEN** | Peek at the gardens of Villa Chigi, a 19th-century villa built on the site of a 14th-century castle (actually the “new castle” from which Castelnuovo got its name). The villa is closed to the public, but its manicured gardens are open on Sunday and holidays. ✉ *Via Berardenga 20.*

## h Hotels

### Borgo San Felice

\$\$\$\$ | **B&B/INN** | Spread across five buildings, this elegant lodging used to be a small medieval town, but now it’s given over to luxury, which is immediately apparent upon entering the reception area: white walls, high vaulted ceilings, and furniture covered in exquisite chintz prints mingle with tasteful etchings and watercolors. **Pros:** beautiful buildings; romantic setting; heated pool.

**Cons:** service is sometimes lax; need a car to get around.  *Rooms from: €385*  *Località San Felice, 8 km (5 miles) northwest of Castelnuovo Berardenga*  *0577/3964*  [www.borgosanfelice.com](http://www.borgosanfelice.com)  *Closed Nov.–Mar.*  
 *49 rooms*  *All-inclusive.*

## Siena

With its narrow streets and steep alleys, a Gothic Duomo, a bounty of early Renaissance art, and the glorious Palazzo Pubblico overlooking its magnificent Campo, Siena is often described as Italy's best-preserved medieval city. It is also remarkably modern: many shops sell clothes by up-and-coming designers. Make a point of catching the *passeggiata* (evening stroll), when locals throng the Via di Città, Banchi di Sopra, and Banchi di Sotto, the city's three main streets.

Sieneese mythology holds that the city shares common ancestry with Rome: the legendary founder, Senius, was said to be the son of Remus, the twin brother of Rome's founder, Romulus. The city emblem—a she-wolf and suckling twin boys—promulgates the claim. Archaeological evidence suggests there were prehistoric as well as Etruscan settlements here, which undoubtedly made way for Saena Julia, the Roman town established by Augustus in the 1st century BC.

Siena rose to prominence as an essential stop on that most important of medieval roads, the Via Francigena (or Via Romea), prospering from the yearly flow of thousands of Christian pilgrims coming south to Rome from northern Europe. Siena developed a banking system—one of Europe's oldest banks, the Monte dei Paschi, is still very much in business—and dominated the wool trade, thereby establishing itself as a rival to Florence. The two towns became regional powers and bitter enemies, each taking a different side in the struggle that divided the peninsula between the Guelphs (loyal to the Pope) and Ghibellines (loyal to the Holy Roman Emperor). Siena aligned itself with the latter.

Victory over Florence in 1260 at Montaperti marked the beginning of Siena's golden age. Even though Florentines avenged the loss 29 years later, Siena continued to prosper. During the following decades Siena erected its greatest buildings (including the Duomo); established a model city government presided over by the Council of Nine; and became a great art, textile, and trade center. All of these achievements came together in the decoration of the Sala della Pace in Palazzo Pubblico. It makes you wonder what greatness the

city might have gone on to achieve had its fortunes been different, but in 1348 a plague decimated the population, brought an end to the Council of Nine, and left Siena economically vulnerable. Siena succumbed to Florentine rule in the mid-16th century, when a yearlong siege virtually eliminated the local population. Ironically, it was precisely this decline that, along with Sienese pride, prevented further development, to which we owe the city's marvelous medieval condition today.

But although much looks as it did in the early 14th century, Siena is no museum. Walk through the streets and you can see that the medieval *contrade*, 17 neighborhoods into which the city has been historically divided, are a vibrant part of modern life. You may see symbols of the *contrada*—Tartuca (turtle), Oca (goose), Istrice (porcupine), Torre (tower)—emblazoned on banners and engraved on building walls. The Sienese still strongly identify themselves by the *contrada* where they were born and raised; loyalty and rivalry run deep. At no time is this more visible than during the centuries-old Palio, a twice-yearly horse race held in the Piazza del Campo, but you need not visit then to come to know the rich culture of Siena.

## GETTING HERE

From Florence, the quickest way to Siena is via the Florence–Siena Superstrada. Otherwise, take the Via Cassia (SR2), for a scenic route. Coming from Rome, leave the A1 at Valdichiana, and follow the Siena–Bettola Superstrada. SITA provides excellent bus service between Florence and Siena. Because buses are direct and speedy, they are preferable to the train, which sometimes involves a change in Empoli.

### Tra-In

City buses run frequently within and around Siena, including the centro storico. Tickets cost €1.30 and must be bought in advance at tobacconists or newsstands. Routes are marked with signposts. ✉ Siena ☎ 0577/204111 🌐 [www.trainspa.it](http://www.trainspa.it).

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS** Siena tourism office. ✉ Piazza del Duomo 2 ☎ 0577/280551 🌐 [www.terresiena.it](http://www.terresiena.it).

## S Sights

If you come by car, you're better off leaving it in one of the parking lots around the perimeter of town, as driving is nearly impractical in most parts of the city center. Practically unchanged since medieval times, Siena is laid out in a "Y" over the slopes of three hills, dividing the city into *terzi* (thirds). Although the most interesting sites are in a fairly compact area around the Campo at the center of town, be sure to leave some time to wander into the narrow streets that rise and fall steeply from the main thoroughfares, giving yourself at least two days to explore. At the top on the list of things to see is the Piazza del Campo, considered by many to be the finest public square in Italy. The Palazzo Pubblico at the lower end of the square is worth a visit. The Duomo is a must-see, as is the Cripta.

It's a joy to walk in Siena—hills notwithstanding—as it's a rare opportunity to stroll through a medieval city rather than just a town. (There is quite a lot to explore, in contrast to tiny hill towns that can be crossed in minutes.) The walk can be done in as little as a day, with minimal stops at the sights. But stay longer and take time to tour the church building and museums, and to enjoy the streetscapes themselves. Several attractions have reduced hours Sunday afternoon and Monday.

### Battistero

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | The Duomo's 14th-century Gothic Baptistery was built to prop up the apse of the cathedral. There are frescoes throughout, but the highlight is a large bronze 15th-century baptismal font designed by Jacopo della Quercia (1374–1438). It's adorned with bas-reliefs by various artists, including two by Renaissance masters: the *Baptism of Christ* by Lorenzo Ghiberti (1378–1455) and the *Feast of Herod* by Donatello. ✉ Piazza San Giovanni, Città ☎ 0577/286300 🌐 [www.operaduomo.siena.it](http://www.operaduomo.siena.it) 🎫 €18 combined ticket includes the Duomo, Cripta, and Museo dell'Opera.

### Casa di Santa Caterina

**HOUSE** | Caterina Benincasa was born here in 1347. She had divine visions and received the stigmata, but is most famous for her words and her argumentative skills. Her letters—many of which are preserved in the

Biblioteca Comunale—were dictated because she did not know how to write. She is credited with convincing Pope Gregory XI (1329–78) to return the papacy to Rome after 70 years in Avignon and French domination, ending the Western Schism. Caterina died in Rome in 1380 and was canonized in 1461. The rooms of the house, including her cell and the kitchen, were converted into a series of chapels and oratories and decorated by noteworthy artists over the following centuries with scenes from Caterina’s life. In 1939 she was made a patron saint of Italy, along with St. Francis of Assisi. In 1970 she was elevated to Doctor of the Church, the highest possible honor in Christendom. She has been named a patron saint of Europe but, strangely enough, never of her hometown. ✉ *Costa di Sant’Antonio 6, Camollia* ☎ 0577/288175 🗺 *Free.*

### ★ Cripta

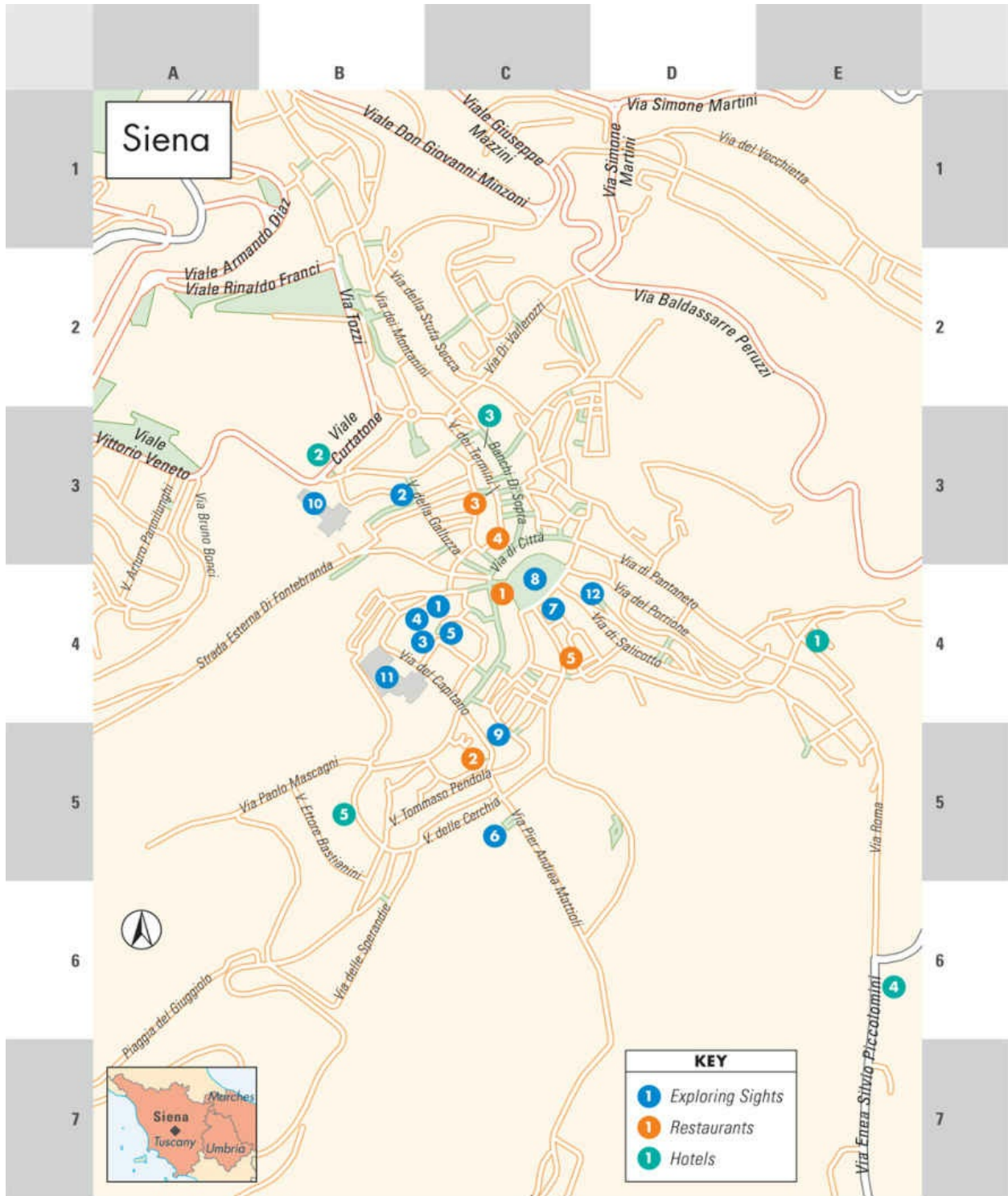
**RELIGIOUS SITE** | After it had lain unseen for possibly 700 years, a crypt was rediscovered under the grand *pavimento* (floor) of the Duomo during routine excavation work and was opened to the public in 2003. An unknown master executed the breathtaking frescoes here sometime between 1270 and 1280; they retain their original colors and pack an emotional punch even with sporadic damage. The *Deposition/Lamentation* gives strong evidence that the Sienese school could paint emotion just as well as the Florentine school—and did it some 20 years before Giotto. ✉ *Scale di San Giovanni, Città* ↕ *Down steps to right side of cathedral* ☎ 0577/286300 🌐 [www.operaduomo.siena.it](http://www.operaduomo.siena.it) 🗺 €13 combined ticket includes the Duomo, Battistero, Panorama dal Facciatone, Sotto il Duomo, and Museo dell’Opera.

### ★ Duomo

**BUILDING** | Siena’s cathedral is beyond question one of the finest Gothic churches in Italy. The multicolor marbles and painted decoration are typical of the Italian approach to Gothic architecture—lighter and much less austere than the French. The amazingly detailed facade has few rivals in the region. It was completed in two brief phases at the end of the 13th and 14th centuries. The statues and decorative work were designed by Nicola Pisano and his son Giovanni, although most of what we see today are copies, the originals having been removed to the nearby Museo dell’Opera. The gold mosaics are 18th-century restorations. The Campanile (no entry) is among central Italy’s

finest, the number of windows increasing with each level, a beautiful and ingenious way of reducing the weight of the structure as it climbs to the heavens.





Sights	
1 Battistero	C4
2 Casa di Santa Caterina	B3
3 Cripta	B4
4 Duomo	C4
5 Museo dell'Opera	C4
6 Orto Botanico	C5

7 Palazzo Pubblico	C4
8 Piazza del Campo	C4
9 Pinacoteca Nazionale	C5
10 San Domenico	B3
11 Santa Maria della Scala	B4
12 Sinagoga	D4

Restaurants	
1 Liberamente Osteria	C4
2 Osteria Castelvecchio	C5
3 Osteria Il Grattacielo	C3
4 Prètto	C3
5 Trattoria Papei	C4

Hotels	
1 Antica Torre	E4
2 Chiusarelli	B3
3 Grand Hotel Continental	C3
4 Hotel Santa Caterina	E6
5 Palazzo Ravizza	B5

The Duomo's interior, with its dark green-and-white striping throughout and illusionistically coffered and gilded dome, is simply striking. Step in and look back up at a copy of Duccio's (circa 1255–1319) panels of stained glass that once filled the circular entrance window—the originals are now in the Museo dell'Opera Metropolitana. Finished in 1288, the window is the oldest example of stained glass in Italy. The Duomo is most famous for its unique and magnificent inlaid-marble floors, which took almost 200 years to complete; more than 40 artists contributed to the work, made up of 56 separate compositions depicting biblical scenes, allegories, religious symbols, and civic emblems. The floors are covered for most of the year for conservation purposes, but are unveiled during September and October. The Duomo's carousel pulpit, also much appreciated, was carved by Nicola Pisano (circa 1220–84) around 1265; the *Life of Christ* is depicted on the rostrum frieze. In striking contrast to all the Gothic decoration in the nave are the magnificent Renaissance frescoes in the **Biblioteca Piccolomini**, off the left aisle. Painted by Pinturicchio (circa 1454–1513) and completed in 1509, they depict events from the life of Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini (1405–64), who became Pope Pius II in 1458. The frescoes are in excellent condition, and have a freshness rarely seen in work so old.

The Duomo is grand, but the medieval Siennese people had even bigger plans. They wanted to enlarge the building by using the existing church as a transept for a new church, with a new nave running toward the southeast, to make what would be the largest church in the world. But only the side wall and part of the new facade were completed when the Black Death struck in 1348, decimating Siena's population. The city fell into decline, funds dried up, and the plans were never carried out. (The dream of building the biggest church was actually doomed to failure from the start—subsequent attempts to get the project going revealed that the foundation was insufficient to bear the weight of the proposed structure.) The beginnings of the new nave, extending from the right side of the Duomo, were left unfinished, perhaps as a testament to unfulfilled dreams, and ultimately enclosed to house the adjacent **Museo dell'Opera**. The **Cripta** was discovered during routine preservation work on the church and has been opened to the public. The last entrance to the Duomo is 30 minutes before closing. ✉ *Piazza del Duomo, Città* ☎ 0577/286300 🌐

[www.operaduomo.siena.it](http://www.operaduomo.siena.it) 📧 €13 combined ticket includes Cripta, Battistero, Panorama dal Facciato, Sotto il Duomo, and Museo dell'Opera.

### ★ Museo dell'Opera

**MUSEUM** | Part of the unfinished nave of what was to have been a new cathedral, the museum contains the Duomo's treasury and some of the original decoration from its facade and interior. The first room on the ground floor displays weather-beaten 13th-century sculptures by Giovanni Pisano (circa 1245–1318) that were brought inside for protection and replaced by copies, as was a tondo of the *Madonna and Child* (now attributed to Donatello) that once hung on the door to the south transept. The masterpiece is unquestionably Duccio's *Maestà*, one side with 26 panels depicting episodes from the Passion, the other side with a *Madonna and Child Enthroned*. Painted between 1308 and 1311 as the altarpiece for the Duomo (where it remained until 1505), its realistic elements, such as the lively depiction of the Christ child and the treatment of interior space, proved an enormous influence on later painters. The work originally decorated the Duomo's high altar, before being displaced by Duccio's *Maestà*. There is a fine view from the tower inside the museum. 📧 *Piazza del Duomo 8, Città* 📞 0577/286300 🌐 [www.operaduomo.siena.it](http://www.operaduomo.siena.it) 📧 €13 combined ticket includes the Duomo, Cripta, Panorama dal Facciato, Sotto il Duomo, and Battistero.

### Orto Botanico

**GARDEN** | Siena's botanical garden is a great place to relax and enjoy views onto the countryside below. Guided tours in English are available by reservation. 📧 *Via Pier Andrea Mattioli 4, Città* 📞 0577/235407 🌐 [www.ortobotanicoitalia.it](http://www.ortobotanicoitalia.it) 📧 Free.

### Palazzo Pubblico

**GOVERNMENT BUILDING** | The Gothic Palazzo Pubblico, the focal point of the Piazza del Campo, has served as Siena's town hall since the 1300s. It now also contains the Museo Civico, with walls covered in early Renaissance frescoes. The nine governors of Siena once met in the Sala della Pace, famous for Ambrogio Lorenzetti's frescoes called *Allegories of Good and Bad Government*, painted in the late 1330s to demonstrate the dangers of

tyranny. The good government side depicts utopia, showing first the virtuous ruling council surrounded by angels and then scenes of a perfectly running city and countryside. Conversely, the bad government fresco tells a tale straight out of Dante. The evil ruler and his advisers have horns and fondle strange animals, and the town scene depicts the seven mortal sins in action. The **Torre del Mangia**, the palazzo's famous bell tower, is named after one of its first bell ringers, Giovanni di Duccio (called Mangiaguadagni, or earnings eater). The climb up to the top is long and steep, but the view makes it worth every step. ✉ *Piazza del Campo 1, Città* ☎ 0577/292232 🌐 [www.comune.siena.it](http://www.comune.siena.it) 📧 *Museum €9, ticket sales end 30 mins before closing; tower €10, ticket sales end 45 mins before closing.*

### ★ **Piazza del Campo**

**PLAZA** | The fan-shape Piazza del Campo, known simply as il Campo (The Field), is one of the finest squares in Italy. Constructed toward the end of the 12th century on a market area unclaimed by any contrada, it's still the heart of town. The bricks of the Campo are patterned in nine different sections—representing each member of the medieval Government of Nine. At the top of the Campo is a copy of the early 15th-century **Fonte Gaia** by Siena's greatest sculptor, Jacopo della Quercia. The 13 sculpted reliefs of biblical events and virtues that line the fountain are 19th-century copies; the originals are in the museum complex of Santa Maria della Scala. On Palio horse-race days (July 2 and August 16), the Campo and all its surrounding buildings are packed with cheering, frenzied locals and tourists craning their necks to take it all in. ✉ *Piazza del Campo, Città.*

### **Pinacoteca Nazionale**

**MUSEUM** | The superb collection of five centuries of local painting in Siena's national picture gallery can easily convince you that the Renaissance was by no means just a Florentine thing. Accordingly, the most interesting section of the collection, chronologically arranged, has several important firsts. Room 1 contains a painting of the *Stories of the True Cross* (1215) by the so-called Master of Tressa, the earliest identified work by a painter of the Sienese school, and is followed in Room 2 by late-13th-century artist Guido da Siena's *Stories from the Life of Christ*, one of the first paintings ever made on canvas (earlier painters used wood panels). Rooms 3 and 4 are dedicated to

Duccio, a student of Cimabue (circa 1240–1302) and considered to be the last of the proto-Renaissance painters. Ambrogio Lorenzetti's landscapes in Room 8 are the first truly secular paintings in Western art. Among later works in the rooms on the floor above, keep an eye out for the preparatory sketches used by Domenico Beccafumi (1486–1551) for the 35 etched marble panels he made for the floor of the Duomo. ✉ *Via San Pietro 29, Città* ☎ 0577/286143 🌐 [www.pinacotecanazionale.siena.it](http://www.pinacotecanazionale.siena.it) 🗳️ €4 🕒 Closed Mon.

## San Domenico

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | Although the Duomo is celebrated as a triumph of 13th-century Gothic architecture, this church, built at about the same time, turned out to be an oversize, hulking brick box that never merited a finishing coat in marble, let alone a graceful facade. Named for the founder of the Dominican order, the church is now more closely associated with St. Catherine of Siena. Just to the right of the entrance is the chapel in which she received the stigmata. On the wall is the only known contemporary portrait of the saint, made in the late 14th century by Andrea Vanni (circa 1332–1414). Farther down is the famous **Cappella delle Santa Testa**, the church's official shrine. Catherine, or bits and pieces of her, was literally spread all over the country—a foot is in Venice, most of her body is in Rome, and only her head (kept in a reliquary on the chapel's altar) and her right thumb are here. She was revered throughout the country long before she was officially named a patron saint of Italy in 1939. On either side of the chapel are well-known frescoes by Sodoma (aka Giovanni Antonio Bazzi, 1477–1549) of *St. Catherine in Ecstasy*. Don't miss the view of the Duomo and town center from the apse-side terrace. ✉ *Piazza San Domenico, Camollia* ☎ 0577/286848 🌐 [www.basilicacateriniana.com](http://www.basilicacateriniana.com).

## ★ Santa Maria della Scala

**MUSEUM** | For more than 1,000 years, this complex across from the Duomo was home to Siena's hospital, but now it serves as a museum to display some terrific frescoes and other Siennese Renaissance treasures. Restored 15th-century frescoes in the Sala del Pellegrinaio (once the emergency room) tell the history of the hospital, which was created to give refuge to passing pilgrims and to those in need, and to distribute charity to the poor. Incorporated into the complex is the church of the Santissima Annunziata,

with a celebrated *Risen Christ* by Vecchietta (also known as Lorenzo di Pietro, circa 1412–80). Down in the dark, Cappella di Santa Caterina della Notte is where St. Catherine went to pray at night. The displays—including the *buccheri* (dark, reddish clay) ceramics, Roman coins, and tomb furnishings—are clearly marked and can serve as a good introduction to the history of regional excavations. Don't miss della Quercia's original sculpted reliefs in the subterranean archaeological museum from the Fonte Gaia. Although the fountain has been faithfully copied for the Campo, there's something incomparably beautiful about the real thing. ✉ *Piazza del Duomo 1, Città* ☎ 0577/534511 🌐 [www.santamariadellascala.com](http://www.santamariadellascala.com) 📄 €18 includes admission to the Duomo, Museo dell'Opera, Panorama dal Facciatone, Cripta, Battistero, and Sotto il Duomo. 🕒 Closed Tues.

## Sinagoga

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | Down a small street around the corner from il Campo, this synagogue is worth a visit simply to view the two sobering plaques that adorn its facade. One commemorates June 28, 1799, when 13 Jews were taken from their homes by a fanatic mob and burned in the square. The other memorializes the Sienese Jews who were deported during World War II. Visits are permitted every half hour, and guided tours in English are available by prior arrangement. ✉ *Vicolo delle Scotte 14, San Martino* ☎ 0577/271345 📄 €4 🕒 Closed Sat.

## 🍴 Restaurants

### Liberamente Osteria

\$ | **ITALIAN** | Though the food here is rather good, the real reason to come here is for the exquisitely crafted cocktails, and the view, which just happens to be il Campo, arguably the prettiest square in all of Italy. Tasty little nibbles accompany these generously proportioned aperitivi. **Known for:** variations on the spritz; facility with rum-based drinks; opens early (9 am) and closes late (2 am). 💰 *Average main: €7* ✉ *Il Campo 27* ☎ 0577/274733 🌐 [www.liberamenteosteria.it](http://www.liberamenteosteria.it).

### Osteria Castelvecchio

\$ | TUSCAN | On the daily menu you're likely to find both Sieneſe standards, ſuch as ſpaghetti *saporiti con agli aromi* (with tomatoes and herbs), as well as more offbeat ſelections like *bocconcini di pollo alla mediterranea* (tender chicken cooked in a robuſt tomato-and-olive ſauce). Husband-and-wife team Simone Romi and Sabrina Fabi are committed to including *piatti di verdura* (vegetarian diſhes) among the choices, and they've put together a great wine liſt. **Known for:** taſting menu; historic ſetting; excellent wine liſt. [D] *Average main: €12* ✉ *Via Caſtelvecchio 65, Città* ☎ *0577/49586* 🌐 [www.caſtelvecchio.it](http://www.caſtelvecchio.it) 🕒 *Closed Tues.*

### Osteria Il Grattacielo

\$ | TUSCAN | If you're wiped out from too much ſightſeeing, conſider a meal at this hole-in-the-wall reſtaurant where locals congregate for a ſimple lunch over a glaſs of wine. There's a collection of verdure *sott'olio*, a wide ſelection of *affettati misti*, and various types of *frittatas*, and all of this can be waſhed down with the cheap, yet eminently drinkable, houſe red. **Known for:** ſimple, good-value food; earthy ambience; uſually filled with local men arguing about the Palio. [D] *Average main: €10* ✉ *Via Pontani 8, Camollia* ☎ *334/6311458* 🚫 *No credit cards.*

### Prètto

\$ | ITALIAN | This one-room "proſciutteria" opens late in the morning and closes late at night; pork products in their various incarnations are ſerved up in ſalads and ſandwiches. The wine liſt is particularly ſtrong with bottles from the area, and is reaſonably priced. **Known for:** *lampredotto*; *porchetta*; deſserts. [D] *Average main: €10* ✉ *Via dei Termini, 4, Città* ☎ *0577/289089* 🌐 [www.prettoproſciutteria.it](http://www.prettoproſciutteria.it).

### Trattoria Papei

\$ | TUSCAN | The menu haſn't changed for years, and why ſhould it? This place has been in the Papei family for three generations, and they know how to turn out Sieneſe ſpecialties: their reaſonable prices and fine, baſic fare is what draws locals to the place. **Known for:** great place to ſample local ſpecialties; lively atmosphere; outdoor ſeating. [D] *Average main: €13* ✉ *Piazza del Mercato 6, Città* ☎ *0577/280894* 🌐 [www.anticatrat-toriapapei.com](http://www.anticatrat-toriapapei.com).

# h Hotels

## Antica Torre

\$ | B&B/INN | The cordial Landolfo family has carefully evoked a private home with their eight guest rooms inside a restored 16th-century tower, and the simple but tastefully furnished rooms have ornate wrought-iron headboards, usually atop twin beds. **Pros:** near the town center; charming atmosphere; location. **Cons:** narrow stairway up to the rooms; low ceilings; books up quickly. [D] Rooms from: €90 [E] Via Fieravecchia 7, San Martino [F] 0577/222255 [G] [www.anticatorresiena.it](http://www.anticatorresiena.it) [H] 8 rooms [I] Free breakfast.

## Chiusarelli

\$\$ | B&B/INN | Caryatids stud the grounds of this well-kept Neoclassical villa (it's been a hotel since 1870); a small garden invites reading. **Pros:** near the main bus terminal; spacious rooms; quiet garden. **Cons:** on a busy street; bland furnishings; hosts the occasional tour group. [D] Rooms from: €200 [E] Viale Curtatone 15, Camollia [F] 0577/280562 [G] [www.chiusarelli.com](http://www.chiusarelli.com) [H] 48 rooms [I] Free breakfast.

## Grand Hotel Continental

\$\$\$\$ | HOTEL | Pope Alexander VII of the famed Sienese Chigi family gave this palace to his niece as a wedding present in 1600; through the centuries it has been a private family home as well as a grand hotel exuding elegance from the stately pillared entrance to the crisp-linen sheets. **Pros:** luxurious accommodations; great location on the main drag; first-rate concierge. **Cons:** sometimes stuffy atmosphere; lots of noise if your room is street-side; breakfast costs extra. [D] Rooms from: €389 [E] Banchi di Sopra 85, Camollia [F] 0577/56011 [G] [www.starhotelscollezione.com](http://www.starhotelscollezione.com) [H] 51 rooms [I] No meals.

## Hotel Santa Caterina

\$\$ | B&B/INN | Manager Lorenza Capannelli and her fine staff are welcoming, hospitable, enthusiastic, and go out of their way to ensure a fine stay; rooms in the back look out onto the garden or the countryside in the distance. **Pros:** friendly staff; a short walk to center of town; breakfast in the garden. **Cons:** on a busy intersection; outside city walls; 15-minute (easy) walk into the



historic center. [💰] Rooms from: €145 [✉] Via Piccolomini 7, San Martino [📞] 0577/221105 [🌐] [www.hscsiena.it](http://www.hscsiena.it) [👉] 22 rooms [🗳️] Free breakfast.

### ★ Palazzo Ravizza

\$\$ | HOTEL | This charming palazzo exudes a sense of an age gone by; its guest rooms have high ceilings, antique furnishings, and bathrooms decorated with hand-painted tiles. **Pros:** 10-minute walk to the center of town; pleasant garden with a view beyond the city walls; professional staff. **Cons:** not all rooms have views; some rooms are a little cramped; somewhat removed from the center of things. [💰] Rooms from: €200 [✉] Pian dei Mantellini 34, Città [📞] 0577/280462 [🌐] [www.palazzoravizza.it](http://www.palazzoravizza.it) [👉] 43 rooms [🗳️] Free breakfast.

## n Nightlife

### Caffè del Corso

BARS/PUBS | Join the locals for *aperitivi* (apertifs) at this very popular bar, where aspiring artists and savvy students hobnob until 3 am. [✉] Banchi di Sopra 25, Camollia [📞] 0577/226656.

### Sapordivino

BARS/PUBS | This wine bar at the Grand Hotel Continental is a tranquil place to have a finely crafted cocktail. A well-stocked liquor collection includes a well-thought-out list of whiskeys. [✉] Banchi di Sopra 85, Città [📞] 0577/56011 [🌐] [www.starhotelscollezione.com](http://www.starhotelscollezione.com).

## p Performing Arts

### Estate Musicale Chigiana

MUSIC | Master classes and workshops held by internationally famous musicians result in top-notch performances in Siena between July and September. Age-old venues such as the Accademia Musicale Chigiana, the Spedale di Santa Maria della Scala, the church of Sant'Agostino, and Piazza Duomo are used for these exceptional concerts. It is best to book well in advance as tickets are usually in high demand. The ChigianArt Cafe is a

perfect place for a light lunch or a cocktail. ✉ *Accademia Musicale Chigiana, Via di Città 89, Città* ☎ 0577/22091 🌐 [www.chigiana.it](http://www.chigiana.it).

### **Settimane Musicali Senesi festival**

**CONCERTS** | Performances by local and national classical musicians take place during a series of concerts held in churches and courtyards during the Settimane Musicali Senesi festival in July and August. ✉ *Siena* 🌐 [www.chigiana.it](http://www.chigiana.it).

## **b Shopping**

Siena is known for a delectable variety of cakes and cookies with recipes dating to medieval times. Some Siennese sweets are *cavallucci* (sweet spice biscuits), *panforte* (a traditional Christmas delicacy, literally “strong bread,” with honey, hazelnuts, almonds, and spices), *ricciarelli* (almond-paste cookies), and *castagnaccio* (a baked Tuscan flat cake made in fall and winter from a batter of chestnut flour topped with pine nuts and rosemary).

### **ARTS AND CRAFTS**

#### **Bottega dell’Arte**

**CRAFTS** | If you’ve always wanted a 14th- or 15th-century painting to hang on your wall, but the cost of acquiring one is prohibitive, consider purchasing one of the superb copies at this shop made by Chiara or her brother Michelangelo Casoni. Their work in tempera and in gold leaf is of the highest quality. ✉ *Via Stalloreggi 47, Città* ☎ 0577/40755 🌐 [www.arteinsiena.it](http://www.arteinsiena.it).

#### **Vetrare Artistiche Toscane**

**CRAFTS** | Stained-glass artists create and sell contemporary secular and religious works here. If you want to learn the technique, they also offer workshops and apprenticeship programs. ✉ *Via della Galluzza 5, Camollia* ☎ 0577/48033 🌐 [www.glassisland.com](http://www.glassisland.com).

### **FOOD AND DRINK**

#### **Antico Pizzicheria**

**FOOD/CANDY** | There has been a *salumeria* (delicatessen) here since 1889. The

cheeses, cured meats, and made-to-order panini are top-notch. ✉ *Via di Città 93–95, Città* ☎ 0577/289164.

### **La Bottega dei Sapori Antichi**

FOOD/CANDY | Bruno De Miccoli stocks an impressive array of verdure sott'olio, local wines, and dried herbs in his food-and-wine bar. ✉ *Via delle Terme 39–41, Camollia* ☎ 0577/285501.

### **Nannini**

FOOD/CANDY | Locals flock to this central café to quaff a cappuccino and pick up panforte (the chocolate panforte is a real treat) and ricciarelli to go. ✉ *Banchi di Sopra 24, Camollia* ☎ 0577/236009 🌐 [www.pasticcerienannini.it](http://www.pasticcerienannini.it).

## **a Activities**

### **★ Palio**

HORSE RACING/SHOW | Siena's thrilling horse race takes place every year on July 2 and August 16. Three laps around the track in the Piazza del Campo earn the victor the *palio* (a hand-painted banner, unique to each event), and the respect or scorn of the remaining 16 contrade. Tickets usually sell out months in advance; call the Siena tourist office for more information. Note that some hotels reserve a number of tickets for guests. It's also possible you might luck out and get an unclaimed seat or two. The standing-room center of the piazza is free to all on a first-come, first-served basis, until just moments before the start. If you opt for standing-room, beware of the summer heat, and take water with you. The entry of the horses into the starting gate can sometimes be a lengthy process—they are easily spooked and it can take up to several hours to get things ready—all-in-all, you might be better off finding a comfortable seat in front of a TV. ✉ *Siena tourist office, Piazza del Campo 56, Città* ☎ 0577/280551 🌐 [www.terresiena.it](http://www.terresiena.it).

# Monteriggioni

19 km (12 miles) northwest of Siena, 55 km (34 miles) south of Florence.

Tiny Monteriggioni makes a nice stop on the way north to Colle di Val d'Elsa, San Gimignano, or Volterra. It's hard to imagine that this little town surrounded by poppy fields was ever anything but sleepy, but in the 13th century Monteriggioni served as Siena's northernmost defense against impending Florentine invasion. (It's likely that the residents of the town spent many a sleepless night.) The town's formidable walls are in good condition, although the 14 square towers are not as tall as in Dante's (1265–1321) time, when the poet likened them to giants guarding the horrifying central pit of hell. The town empties of day-trippers at sundown, and this hamlet becomes very tranquil.

## GETTING HERE

You can reach Monteriggioni by car on either the SR2 or the Florence–Siena Superstrada. Buses run frequently to and from Siena. The closest train station to Monteriggioni, with frequent service to and from Siena, is in Castellina Scalo. You will then have to reach Monteriggioni on foot—it's a 4-km (2½-mile) walk.






## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS** **Monteriggioni Tourism Office.** ✉ Piazza Roma 23 📞 0577/304834 🌐 [www.monteriggioniturismo.it](http://www.monteriggioniturismo.it).

## 🍴 Restaurants








### **Il Pozzo**

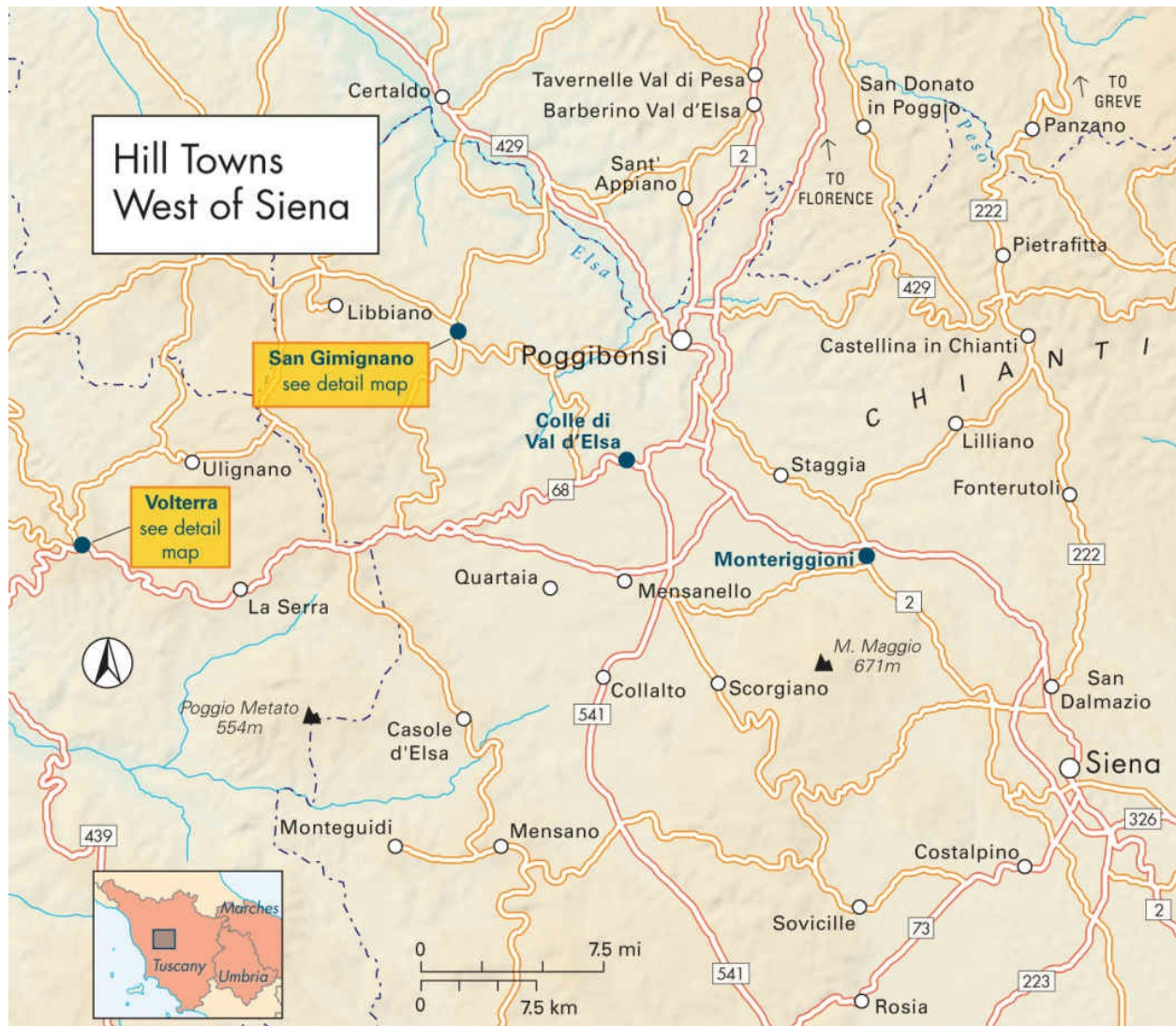
\$\$ | TUSCAN | Famous for its preparation of a 16th-century recipe of *cinghiale al cioccolato* (wild boar stewed in chocolate sauce), this restaurant is a popular spot. Tamer specialties include a range of homemade fresh pastas, *filetto alla boscaiola* (fillet of beef with porcini mushrooms), *piccione ripieno*

(stuffed squab), and a long list of homey desserts. **Known for:** adherence to local cuisine; great wine list; outdoor seating when it's warm.  *Average main: €18*  *Piazza Roma 2, Siena*  *0577/304127*  [www.ilpozzo.net](http://www.ilpozzo.net)   
*Closed Mon., and Jan. 6–Feb. 14.*

## h Hotels

### **Borgo San Luigi**

**\$\$** | **HOTEL** | This 17th-century villa lined with lavender bushes and cypress trees sits just outside Monteriggioni. **Pros:** good base for exploring Siena; some rooms have kitchens; excellent gym and pool. **Cons:** somewhat isolated; few restaurants are within walking distance; a car is a must.   
*Rooms from: €170*  *Strada della Cerretta 7*  *4 km (2½ miles) southwest of Monteriggioni*  *0577/301055*  [www.borgosanluigi.it](http://www.borgosanluigi.it)  *74 rooms*  *Free breakfast.*



## Hotel Monteriggioni

\$\$ | B&B/INN | A sense of freshness comes from the terracotta floors, high wood-beamed ceilings, and soothing whitewashed walls in the hotel's guest rooms. **Pros:** great location inside town walls; well-appointed rooms; peaceful setting. **Cons:** no views beyond the walls; no nightlife to speak of; a car is a must. **\$** Rooms from: €180 ✉ Via I Maggio 4, Siena ☎ 0577/305009 🌐 [www.hotelmonteriggioni.net](http://www.hotelmonteriggioni.net) 🕒 Closed Dec.–Feb. 🛏 12 rooms 🍳 Free breakfast.

## Colle di Val d'Elsa

*12 km (7 miles) west of Monteriggioni, 25 km (16 miles) northwest of Siena, 51 km (32 miles) south of Florence.*

Most people pass through on their way to and from popular tourist destinations Volterra and San Gimignano—a shame, because Colle di Val d'Elsa has a lot to offer. It's another town on the Via Francigena that benefited from trade along the pilgrimage route to Rome. Colle got an extra boost in the late 16th century when it was given a bishopric, probably related to an increase in trade when nearby San Gimignano was cut off from the well-traveled road. The town is arranged on two levels, and from the 12th century onward the flat lower portion was given over to a flourishing papermaking industry; today the area is mostly modern, and efforts have shifted toward the production of fine glass and crystal.

Make your way from the newer lower town (Colle Bassa) to the prettier, upper part of town (Colle Alta); the best views of the valley are to be had from Viale della Rimembranza, the road that loops around the western end of town, past the church of San Francesco. The early-16th-century Porta Nuova was inserted into the preexisting medieval walls, just as several handsome Renaissance palazzos were placed into the medieval neighborhood to create what is now called the Borgo. The Via Campana, the main road, passes through the facade of the surreal Palazzo Campana, an otherwise unfinished building that serves as a door connecting the two parts of the upper town. Via delle Volte, named for the vaulted arches that cover it, leads straight to Piazza del Duomo. There is a convenient parking lot off the SS68, with stairs leading up the hill. Buses arrive at Piazza Arnolfo, named after the town's favorite son, Arnolfo di Cambio (circa 1245–1302), the early-Renaissance architect who designed Florence's Duomo and Palazzo Vecchio (but sadly nothing here).

### **GETTING HERE**

You can reach Colle di Val d'Elsa by car on either the SR2 from Siena or the Florence–Siena Superstrada. Bus service to and from Siena and Florence is

frequent.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS Colle di Val d'Elsa Tourism Office.** ✉ *Piazza Arnolfo di Cambio 10* ☎ 0577/921334 🌐 [www.terresiena.it](http://www.terresiena.it).

## S Sights

### Chiesa di Santa Caterina

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | Visit this 15th-century church to view the excellent stained-glass window in the apse, executed by Sebastiano Mainardi (circa 1460–1513), as well as a haunting *Pietà* created by local artist Zacchia Zacchi (1473–1544). ✉ *Via Campana 35*.

### Duomo

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | Several reconstructions have left little to admire of the once-Romanesque Duomo. Inside is the **Cappella del Santo Chiodo** (Chapel of the Holy Nail), built in the 15th century to hold a nail allegedly from the cross upon which Christ was crucified. (Perhaps it inspired the locals to go into the nail-making business, which became another of the town's flourishing industries.) ✉ *Piazza del Duomo*.

### Museo San Pietro

**MUSEUM** | The museum of sacred art displays religious relics as well as triptychs from the Sienese and Florentine schools dating from the 14th and 15th centuries. It also contains the town's tribute to Arnolfo di Cambio, with photos of the buildings he designed for other towns. Down Via del Castello, at No. 63, is the house-tower where Arnolfo was born in 1245. (It's not open to the public.) ✉ *via Gracco del Secco 102* ☎ 0577/286300 🌐 [www.museisenesi.org](http://www.museisenesi.org) 📄 €6, includes the Museo Archeologico.

## r Restaurants



## L'Angolo di Sapia

\$ | TUSCAN | A short and simple set menu that changes with the seasons is one of the reasons to eat here; the other is the sweeping view from the terrace of the countryside below. You might want to start with the *piatto misto* (mixed plate, which in this case includes a slice of vegetable tart and mozzarella and tomatoes) and then continue with one of the house specialties like the *topini della torre* (gnocchi in a vibrant saffron sauce). **Known for:** ever-changing menu; great quality for price; considerate staff. [\$] Average main: €11 [✉] Via del Castello 4 [☎] 0577/921453 [🕒] No dinner.

## L'Antica Trattoria

\$\$ | TUSCAN | Residents of Colle di Val d'Elsa hold this trattoria in high esteem, even though it's a little overpriced. Tuscan classics fill the large menu, which concentrates on game, particularly pheasant, pigeon, and quail. **Known for:** tasting menus; pescatarians will be happy; fine wine list. [\$] Average main: €20 [✉] Piazza Arnolfo di Cambio 23 [☎] 0577/923747 [🌐] [www.anticatrattoriaparadisi.it](http://www.anticatrattoriaparadisi.it) [🕒] Closed Tues.

## Molino il Moro

\$\$ | TUSCAN | The early-12th-century grain mill, now a romantic restaurant, is perched over a rushing river. The chef concocts sophisticated spins on traditional dishes, such as the divine *filetto di coniglio in crosta con purè di pruge* (rabbit loin with a prune puree). **Known for:** inventive cuisine; short but sweet wine list; gorgeous setting. [\$] Average main: €18 [✉] Via della Ruota 2 [☎] 0577/920862 [🌐] [www.molinoilmoro.it](http://www.molinoilmoro.it) [🕒] Closed Mon. No lunch Tues.

## ★ Ristorante Arnolfo

\$\$\$\$ | MODERN ITALIAN | Food lovers should not miss Arnolfo, one of Tuscany's most highly regarded restaurants, where chef Gaetano Trovato sets high standards of creativity; his dishes daringly ride the line between innovation and tradition, almost always with spectacular results. The menu changes frequently but you are always sure to find fish and lots of fresh vegetables in the summer. **Known for:** talented chef; imaginative dishes; superb wine list. [\$] Average main: €120 [✉] Via XX Settembre 50 [☎] 0577/920549 [🌐] [www.arnolfo.com](http://www.arnolfo.com) [🕒] Closed Tues. and Wed., and mid-Jan.–

Feb.

## h Hotels

### Palazzo San Lorenzo

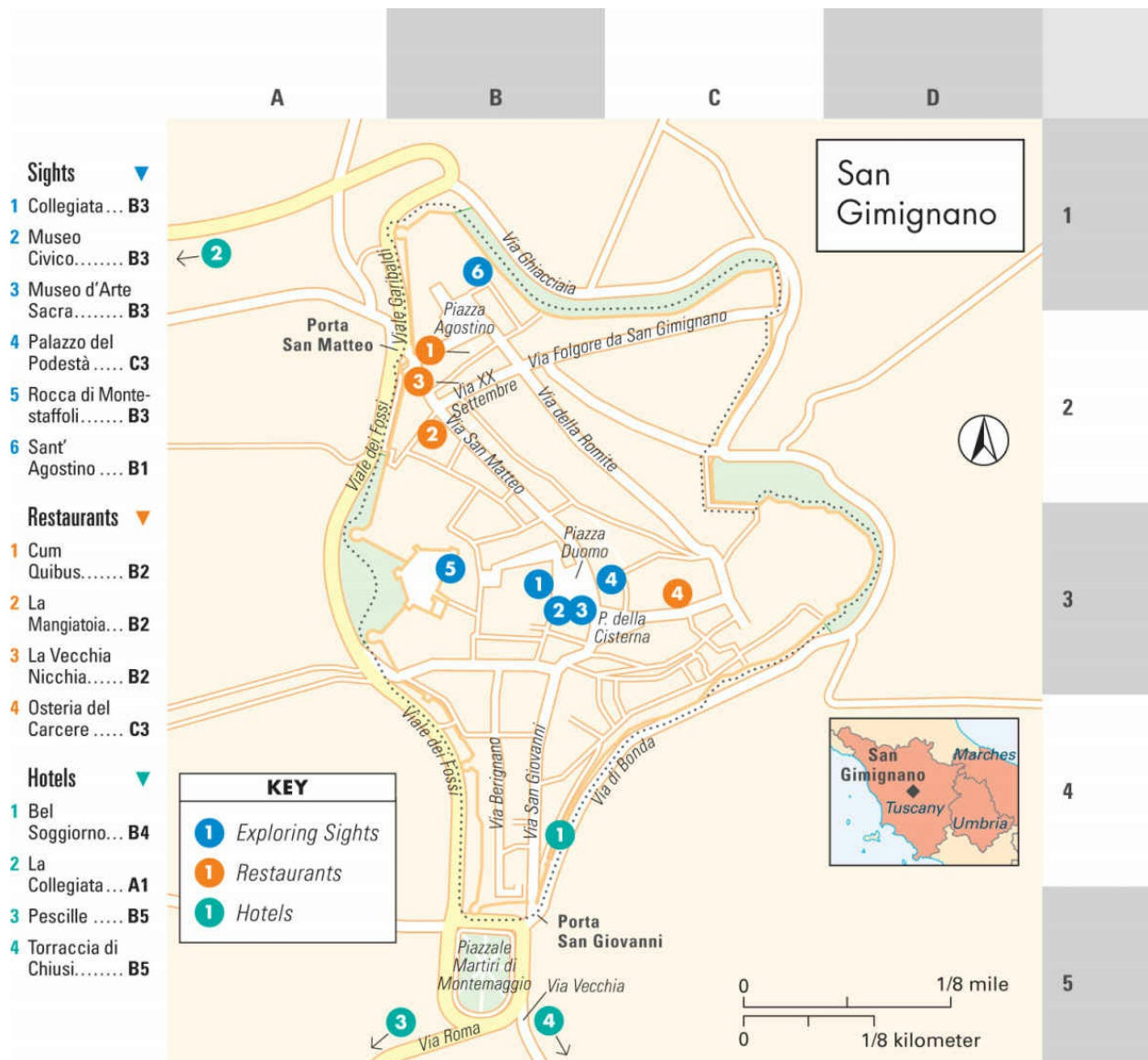
\$ | B&B/INN | A 17th-century palace in the historic center of Colle boasts rooms that exude warmth and comfort, with light-color wooden floors, soothingly tinted fabrics, and large windows. **Pros:** central location; indoor pool; extremely well maintained. **Cons:** caters to business groups; some of the public spaces feel rather sterile; a car is a necessity. [D] *Rooms from: €104*  
✉ *Via Gracco del Secco 113* ☎ *0577/923675* 🌐 [www.palazzosanlorenzo.it](http://www.palazzosanlorenzo.it)  
👉 *48 rooms* 🍳 *Free breakfast.*

## San Gimignano

*14 km (9 miles) northwest of Colle di Val d'Elsa, 38 km (24 miles) northwest of Siena, 54 km (34 miles) southwest of Florence.*

When you're on a hilltop surrounded by soaring medieval towers silhouetted against the sky, it's difficult not to fall under the spell of San Gimignano. Its tall walls and narrow streets are typical of Tuscan hill towns, but it's the medieval "skyscrapers" that set the town apart from its neighbors. Today 14 towers remain, but at the height of the Guelph–Ghibelline conflict there was a forest of more than 70, and it was possible to cross the town by rooftop rather than by road. The towers were built partly for defensive purposes—they were a safe refuge and useful for hurling stones on attacking enemies—and partly for bolstering the egos of their owners, who competed with deadly seriousness to build the highest tower in town.

The relative proximity of San Gimignano, arguably Tuscany's best-preserved medieval hill town, to Siena and Florence also makes it one of Italy's most-visited places. But the traffic is hardly a new problem; the Etruscans were encamped here, and the Romans made it an outpost. With the yearly flow of pilgrims to and from Rome in the Middle Ages, the town—then known as Castel di Selva—became a prosperous market center. When locals prayed to a martyred bishop from Modena for relief from invading barbarians, relief they got, and in gratitude they rechristened the town in his honor as San Gimignano. Devastated by the Black Death of 1348, the town subsequently fell under Florentine control. Things got going again in the Renaissance, with some of the best and brightest painters —Ghirlandaio (1449–94), Benozzo Gozzoli (1420–97), and Pinturicchio (circa 1454–1513)—coming to work, but soon after, the main road was moved, cutting San Gimignano off from the main trade route and sending it into decline.



Today San Gimignano isn't much more than a gentrified walled city, touristy but still very much worth exploring because, despite the profusion of cheesy souvenir shops lining the main drag, there's some serious Renaissance art to be seen here. Tour groups arrive early and clog the wine-tasting rooms—San Gimignano is famous for its light white Vernaccia—and art galleries for much of the day, but most sights stay open through late afternoon, when most tour groups have long since departed.

## GETTING HERE

You can reach San Gimignano by car from the Florence–Siena Superstrada.

Exit at Poggibonsi Nord and follow signs for San Gimignano. Although it involves changing buses in Poggibonsi, getting to San Gimignano by bus from Florence is a relatively straightforward affair. SITA operates the service between Siena or Florence and Poggibonsi. From Siena, Tra-In offers direct service to San Gimignano several times daily. You cannot reach San Gimignano by train.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS** **San Gimignano tourism office.** ✉ *Piazza Duomo 1* 📞  
0577/940008 🌐 [www.sangimignano.com](http://www.sangimignano.com).

## S Sights

The center of San Gimignano is closed to traffic. If you arrive by car, there are parking lots next to the Parco della Rimembranza, near Porta San Giovanni, the main pedestrian entrance into town. Buses from Florence and Siena all stop at Porta San Giovanni. Follow Via San Giovanni a short way to the center of town. Souvenir shops lining the way leave no doubt about the lifeblood of the town, but better things lie ahead. Pass under Arco dei Becci, a leftover from the city's Etruscan walls, to Piazza della Cisterna, a square named for the cistern at its center. The Piazza del Duomo, where you'll find the Museo Civico, lies just beyond the two towers built by the Ardinghelli family. Continue along Via San Matteo and turn right just before Porta San Matteo to reach Sant'Agostino.

You can see all of San Gimignano's main sights in a single day. But, if you arrive in the morning and leave in the afternoon, you miss the town at its best. From 9 to 5 tourists on jaunts from Florence and Siena swarm San Gimignano's streets, filling the shops and museums. In the evening, when all the day-trippers have departed, the town is transformed. Reclaiming its serenity, San Gimignano takes on a magically medieval air that, if you can possibly stay the night in or near town, is not to be missed.

### ★ Collegiata

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | The town's main church is not officially a duomo (cathedral), because San Gimignano has no bishop. But behind the simple

facade of the Romanesque Collegiata lies a treasure trove of fine frescoes, covering nearly every part of the interior. Bartolo di Fredi's 14th-century fresco cycle of Old Testament scenes extends along one wall. Their distinctly medieval feel, with misshapen bodies, buckets of spurting blood, and lack of perspective, contrasts with the much more reserved scenes from the Life of Christ (attributed to 14th-century artist Lippo Memmi), painted on the opposite wall just 14 years later. Taddeo di Bartolo's otherworldly Last Judgment (late 14th century), with its distorted and suffering nudes, reveals the great influence of Dante's horrifying imagery in *Inferno*. Proof that the town had more than one protector, Benozzo Gozzoli's arrow-riddled St. Sebastian was commissioned in gratitude after the locals prayed to the saint for relief from plague. The Cappella di Santa Fina is decorated with a fresco cycle by Domenico Ghirlandaio illustrating the life of St. Fina. ✉ *Piazza Pecori 1–2, entrance on left side of church* ☎ 0577/286300 🌐 [www.duomosangimignano.it](http://www.duomosangimignano.it) 📄 €9, includes Torre Grossa and Pinacoteca 🕒 Closed Jan. 1 and Dec. 25.

## Museo Civico

**CASTLE/PALACE** | The impressive civic museum occupies what was the “new” Palazzo del Popolo; the Torre Grossa is adjacent. Dante visited San Gimignano for only one day as a Guelph ambassador from Florence to ask the locals to join the Florentines in supporting the pope—just long enough to get the main council chamber, which now holds a 14th-century *Maestà* by Lippo Memmi, named after him. Off the stairway is a small room containing the racy frescoes by Memmo di Filippuccio (active 1288–1324), depicting the courtship, shared bath, and wedding of a young, androgynous-looking couple. That the space could have been a private room for the commune's chief magistrate may have something to do with the work's highly charged eroticism.

Upstairs, paintings by famous Renaissance artists Pinturicchio (*Madonna Enthroned*) and Benozzo Gozzoli (*Madonna and Child*), and two large *tondi* (circular paintings) by Filippino Lippi (circa 1457–1504) attest to the importance and wealth of San Gimignano. Admission includes the steep climb to the top of the **Torre Grossa**, which on a clear day has spectacular views. ✉ *Piazza Duomo 2* ☎ 0577/990312 🌐 [www.sangimignanomusei.it](http://www.sangimignanomusei.it) 📄

€9 cumulative ticket.

### Museo d'Arte Sacra

**MUSEUM** | Even with all the decoration in the Collegiata, the fine collection of various religious articles in the church museum, across the pretty courtyard, is still worth a look. The highlight is a *Madonna and Child* by Bartolo di Fredi. Other pieces include several busts, wooden statues of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the angel Gabriel, and several illuminated songbooks. ✉ Piazza Pecori 4 📞 0577/286300 🌐 [www.sangimignano.com](http://www.sangimignano.com) 🎫 €9, includes the Collegiata and the Torre Grossa.

### Palazzo del Podestà

**CASTLE/PALACE** | Across the piazza from the Collegiata is the “old” town hall built in 1239. Its tower was erected by the municipality in 1255 to settle the raging “my-tower-is-bigger-than-your-tower” contest—as you can see, a solution that just didn’t last long. The palace is closed to visitors. ✉ Piazza Duomo.

### Rocca di Montestaffoli

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE** | If you want to see more of that quintessential Tuscan landscape, walk up to the Rocca di Montestaffoli, which sits at the highest point in San Gimignano. Built after the Florentine conquest to keep an eye on the town, and dismantled a few centuries later, it’s now a public garden. ✉ Via della Rocca 🎫 Free.

### Sant’Agostino

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | Make a beeline for Benozzo Gozzoli’s superlative 15th-century fresco cycle depicting scenes from the life of St. Augustine. The saint’s work was essential to the early development of church doctrine. As thoroughly discussed in his autobiographical *Confessions* (an acute dialogue with God), Augustine, like many saints, sinned considerably in his youth before finding God. But unlike the lives of other saints, where the story continues through a litany of deprivations, penitence, and often martyrdom, Augustine’s life and work focused on philosophy and the reconciliation of faith and thought. Benozzo’s 17 scenes on the choir wall depict Augustine as a man who traveled and taught extensively in the 4th and 5th centuries. The

15th-century altarpiece by Piero del Pollaiuolo (1443–96) depicts *The Coronation of the Virgin* and the various protectors of the city. On your way out of Sant’Agostino, stop in at the **Cappella di San Bartolo**, with a sumptuously elaborate tomb by Benedetto da Maiano (1442–97). ✉ Piazza Sant’Agostino 10 ☎ 0577/907012 🌐 [www.sangimignano.com](http://www.sangimignano.com) 🗺 Free.

## 🍽 Restaurants

### ★ Cum Quibus

\$\$\$\$ | ITALIAN | Without a doubt, this is among the most creative food happening in Tuscany. Alberto (in the kitchen) and Lorenzo (in the front) have put together a menu that’s Tuscan but not: it’s rare to see bok choy incorporated into any dish, but they do it with elan. **Known for:** three marvelous tasting menus; incorporation of non-Tuscan ingredients into Tuscan food; amazing wine list with prices to suit all budgets. 💰 Average main: €80 ✉ Via San Martino 17 ☎ 0577/943199 🌐 [www.cumquibus.it](http://www.cumquibus.it) ⏴ Closed Tues.

### La Mangiatoia

\$\$ | TUSCAN | Multicolor gingham tablecloths provide an interesting juxtaposition with rib-vaulted ceilings dating from the 13th century. The lighthearted touch might be explained by the influence of chef Susi Cuomo, who has been presiding over the kitchen for more than 20 years. **Known for:** outdoor dining in summer; seasonal menu; excellent tonnarelli cacio e pepe in autumn. 💰 Average main: €22 ✉ Via Mainardi 5 ☎ 0577/941528 ⏴ Closed Sun. in June–Sept., Tues. in Oct. and Mar.–May, and Nov.–Feb.

### La Vecchia Nicchia

\$\$ | ITALIAN | Though it’s still very much in the center, it’s far from the madding crowds. Wonderful wines pair beautifully with the tasty morsels on hand—those being mostly tasty things put atop toasted bread. **Known for:** wines by the bottle; locally sourced ingredients; genial hosts. 💰 Average main: €15 ✉ Via San Martino 12 ☎ 0577/940803 🌐 [www.lavecchianicchia.it](http://www.lavecchianicchia.it).



## Osteria del Carcere

\$\$ | ITALIAN | Although it calls itself an *osteria* (tavern), this place much more resembles a wine bar, with a bill of fare that includes several different types of pâtés and a short list of seasonal soups and salads. The sampler of goat cheeses, which can be paired with local wines, should not be missed. **Known for:** excellent chef-proprietor; inventive dishes; housed in a former jail. [D] *Average main: €16* ✉ *Via del Castello 13* ☎ *0577/941905* 🕒 *Closed Wed., and early Jan.–Mar. No lunch Thurs.*

## h Hotels

### Bel Soggiorno

\$ | B&B/INN | If you're looking for a place within the town walls, this is a fine choice. **Pros:** inside the ancient walls of San Gimignano; magnificent views; some rooms have small terraces facing the countryside. **Cons:** plain decor; somber public spaces; can be a little noisy if you're street-side. [D] *Rooms from: €95* ✉ *Via San Giovanni 91* ☎ *0577/940375* 🌐 [www.hotelbelsoggiorno.it](http://www.hotelbelsoggiorno.it) 🕒 *Closed Jan. 7–Feb.* 🏠 *21 rooms* 🍴🕒 *Free breakfast.*

### La Collegiata

\$\$\$ | HOTEL | After serving as a Franciscan convent and then the residence of the noble Strozzi family, the Collegiata has been converted into a fine hotel, with no expense spared in the process. **Pros:** gorgeous views from terrace; elegant rooms in main building; wonderful staff. **Cons:** long walk into town; service can be impersonal; some rooms are dimly lit. [D] *Rooms from: €220* ✉ *Località Strada 27, 1 km (½ mile) north of San Gimignano town center* ☎ *0577/943201* 🌐 [www.lacollegiata.it](http://www.lacollegiata.it) 🕒 *Closed Nov.–Mar.* 🏠 *21 rooms* 🍴🕒 *Free breakfast.*

### Pescille

\$ | B&B/INN | A rambling farmhouse has been transformed into a handsome hotel with understated contemporary furniture in the bedrooms and country-classic motifs such as farm implements hanging on the walls in the bar. **Pros:** splendid views; quiet atmosphere; 10-minute walk to town. **Cons:**

furnishings a bit austere; there's an elevator for luggage but not for guests; a vehicle is a must. [D] *Rooms from: €120* ✉ *Località Pescille, 4 km (2½ miles) south of San Gimignano* ☎ *0577/940186* 🌐 [www.pescille.it](http://www.pescille.it) ⌚ *Closed mid-Oct.–Easter* ↗ *38 rooms* 🍳 *Free breakfast.*

### Torraccia di Chiusi

\$\$ | B&B/INN | FAMILY | A perfect retreat for families, this tranquil hilltop *agriturismo* (farm stay) offers simple, comfortably decorated accommodations on extensive grounds 5 km (3 miles) from the hubbub of San Gimignano. **Pros:** tranquil haven close to San Gimignano; great walking possibilities; family-run hospitality; delightful countryside views. **Cons:** 30 minutes from the nearest town on a winding gravel road; need a car to get here; might be too remote for some. [D] *Rooms from: €150* ✉ *Località Montauto* ☎ *0577/941972* 🌐 [www.torracciadichiusi.it](http://www.torracciadichiusi.it) ↗ *11 rooms* 🍳 *Free breakfast.*

## p Performing Arts

### Carnevale

FESTIVALS | San Gimignano is one of the few small towns in the area that make a big deal out of carnival festivities, with locals dressing up in colorful costumes and marching through the streets from 3:30 to 6:30 on the four Sundays preceding Shrove Tuesday. ✉ *San Gimignano.*

### San Gimignano Musica

MUSIC FESTIVALS | If you visit in summer, check with the tourist office about concerts and performances related to San Gimignano's music festival, one of Tuscany's oldest. It's held from late June to September each year. ✉ *Piazza Duomo 1* ☎ *0577/940008* 🌐 [www.sangimignano.com](http://www.sangimignano.com).

## b Shopping

### Antica Latteria di Maurizio e Tiziana

**FOOD/CANDY** | Maurizio and Tiziana's shop has an arresting array of cheeses, and perhaps the best array of verdure sott'olio in town. They also make top-notch panini. ✉ *Via San Matteo 19* ☎ 0577/941952 🌐 [www.enotecaanticalatteria.com](http://www.enotecaanticalatteria.com).

### **Lucia Boni**

**CLOTHING** | This artist at the loom turns out gorgeous scarves, jackets, and other marvels for both men and women. ✉ *via San Giovanni 84* ☎ 0577/942112 🌐 [www.luciaboni.com](http://www.luciaboni.com).

### **Mercato**

**OUTDOOR/FLEA/GREEN MARKETS** | As everywhere else, the town brightens on *mercato* (open-air market) mornings, every Thursday and Saturday, in Piazza del Duomo. It's the place to pick up fresh fruits and other snacks. ✉ *San Gimignano*.

# Volterra

*30 km (18 miles) southwest of San Gimignano.*

As you approach the town through bleak, rugged terrain, you can see that not all Tuscan hill towns rise above rolling green fields. Volterra stands mightily over Le Balze, a stunning series of gullied hills and valleys formed by erosion that has slowly eaten away at the foundation of the town—now considerably smaller than it was during its Etruscan glory days 25 centuries ago. The town began as the northernmost of the 12 cities that made up the Etruscan League, and excavations in the 18th century revealed a bounty of relics, which are on exhibit at the impressively overstocked Museo Etrusco Guarnacci. The Romans and later the Florentines laid siege to the town to secure its supply of minerals and stones, particularly alabaster, which is still worked into handicrafts on sale in many of the shops around town.

## GETTING HERE

By car, the best route from San Gimignano follows the SP1 south to Castel San Gimignano and then the SS68 west to Volterra. Coming from the west, take the SS1, a coastal road to Cecina, then follow the SS68 east to Volterra. Either way, there's a long, winding climb at the end of your trip. Traveling to Volterra by bus or train is complicated; avoid it if possible, especially if you have lots of luggage. From Florence or Siena the journey by public transit is best made by bus and involves a change in Colle di Val d'Elsa. From Rome or Pisa, it is best to take the train to Cecina and then take a bus to Volterra or a train to the Volterra-Saline station. The latter is 10 km (6 miles) from town.

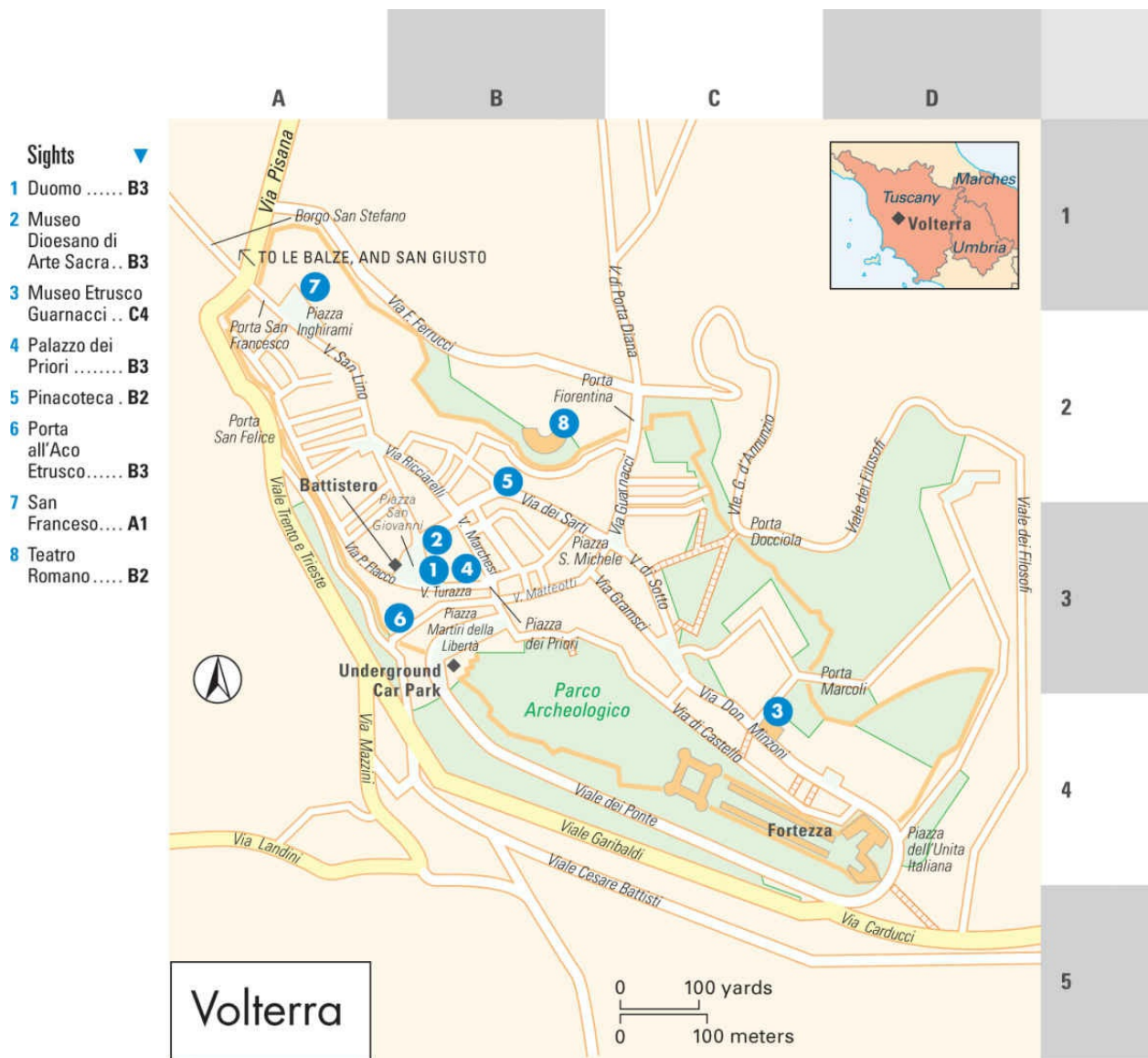
## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS** **Volterra tourism office.** ✉ *Piazza dei Priori 10* 📞  
0588/86150 🌐 [www.provolterra.it](http://www.provolterra.it).

## S Sights

Driving in the old town is forbidden. There are several parking lots around

the perimeter of the city walls, the most convenient of which is the underground parking lot at Piazza Martiri della Libertà. Begin your exploration of Volterra from Piazza Martiri della Libertà and take Via Marchesi to Piazza dei Priori. It's lined with an impressive collection of medieval buildings, including the imposing Palazzo dei Priori, the seat of city government for more than seven centuries. Across the piazza is the Palazzo Pretorio topped by the Torre del Porcellino, named after the sculpted little boar mounted at the upper window. Walk down Via Turazza along the side of the Duomo to the triangular Piazza San Giovanni, and head out the left corner of the piazza to steal a look at the ancient Porta all'Arco Etrusco.



Allow at least three hours to see the town. Off-season, it's best to make an early start in order to have time in the museums before they close. The whole town can easily be seen in a day, although its distance from everything else makes it a good stopover as well.

## Duomo

**BUILDING** | Behind the textbook 13th-century Pisan–Romanesque facade is proof that Volterra counted for something during the Renaissance, when many important Tuscan artists came to decorate the church. Three-dimensional stucco portraits of local saints are on the gold, red, and blue ceiling (1580) designed by Francesco Capriani, including St. Linus, the successor to St. Peter as pope and claimed by the Volterrans to have been born here. The highlight of the Duomo is the brightly painted 13th-century wooden life-size *Deposition* in the chapel of the same name. The unusual Cappella dell'Addolorata (Chapel of the Grieved) has two terracotta Nativity scenes; the depiction of the arrival of the Magi has a background fresco by Benozzo Gozzoli. ✉ *Piazza San Giovanni*.

## Museo Diocesano di Arte Sacra

**MUSEUM** | The religious-art collection housed in the Bishop's Palace was collected from local churches, and includes an unusual reliquary by Antonio Pollaiuolo with the head of St. Octavian in silver resting on four golden lions. There's also a fine terracotta bust of St. Linus by Andrea della Robbia (1435–1525/28). Two paintings are noteworthy: Rosso Fiorentino's (1495–1540) *Madonna di Villamagna* and Daniele da Volterra's (1509–66) *Madonna di Uignano*, named for the village churches in which they were originally placed. ✉ *Palazzo Vescovile, Via Roma 13* ☎ 0588/8773311 📄 €5 🕒 Closed Mon.

## ★ Museo Etrusco Guarnacci

**MUSEUM** | An extraordinarily unique collection of Etruscan relics is made all the more interesting by clear explanations in English. The bulk of the collection is comprised of roughly 700 carved funerary urns: the oldest, dating from the 7th century BC, were made from tufa (volcanic rock); a handful are made of terracotta; and the vast majority—from the 3rd to 1st century BC—are from alabaster. The urns are grouped by subject and taken

together form a fascinating testimony about Etruscan life and death. Some illustrate domestic scenes, others the funeral procession of the deceased. Greek gods and mythology, adopted by the Etruscans, also figure prominently. The sculpted figures on many of the covers may have been made in the image of the deceased, reclining and often holding the cup of life overturned. Particularly well known is *Gli Sposi (Husband and Wife)*, a haunting, elderly duo in terracotta. The *Ombra della Sera (Evening Shadow)*—an enigmatic bronze statue of an elongated, pencil-thin male nude—highlights the collection. Also on display are Attic vases, bucchero ceramics, jewelry, and household items. ✉ *Via Don Minzoni 15* ☎ 0588/86347 📄 *From €8.*

### Palazzo dei Priori

**BUILDING** | Tuscany's first town hall was built between 1208 and 1254, with a no-nonsense facade, fortress-like crenellations, and a five-sided tower. It later served as a model for other town halls throughout the region, including Florence's Palazzo Vecchio. The Florentine medallions that adorn the facade were added after the Florentines conquered Volterra. The town leaders still meet on the first floor in the Sala del Consiglio; the room is open to the public and has a mid-14th-century fresco of the *Annunciation*. ✉ *Piazza dei Priori 1* ☎ 0588/86099 📄 €3.

### Pinacoteca

**MUSEUM** | One of Volterra's best-looking Renaissance buildings contains an impressive collection of Tuscan paintings arranged chronologically on two floors. Head straight for Room 12, with Luca Signorelli's (circa 1445–1523) *Madonna and Child with Saints* and Rosso Fiorentino's later *Deposition*. Though painted just 30 years apart, they serve to illustrate the shift in style from the early 16th-century Renaissance ideals to full-blown mannerism: the balance of Signorelli's composition becomes purposefully skewed in Fiorentino's painting, where the colors go from vivid but realistic to emotively bright. Other important paintings in the small museum include Ghirlandaio's *Apotheosis of Christ with Saints* and a polyptych of the *Madonna and Saints* by Taddeo di Bartolo, which once hung in the Palazzo dei Priori. ✉ *Via dei Sarti 1* ☎ 0588/87580 📄 *From €8.*

## Porta all'Arco Etrusco

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE | Even if a good portion of the arch was rebuilt by the Romans, three dark and weather-beaten 4th-century-BC heads (thought to represent Etruscan gods) still face outward to greet those who enter here. A plaque on the outer wall recalls the efforts of the locals who saved the arch from destruction by filling it with stones during the German withdrawal at the end of World War II. ☒ *Via Porta all'Arco*.

## San Francesco

RELIGIOUS SITE | Look inside the church for the celebrated early-15th-century frescoes of the *Legend of the True Cross* by a local artist. It traces the history of the wood used to make the cross upon which Christ was crucified. From Piazza San Giovanni, take Via Franceschini (which becomes Via San Lino) to the church. ☒ *Piazza Inghirami* ↕ *Off Via San Lino*.

## Teatro Romano

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE | Just outside the walls past Porta Fiorentina are the ruins of the 1st-century-BC Roman theater, one of the best preserved in Italy, with adjacent remains of the Roman *terme* (baths). You can enjoy an excellent bird's-eye view of the theater from Via Lungo le Mura. ☒ *Viale Francesco Ferrucci* 🚌 *From €5* 🕒 *Closed weekdays Nov.–Mar.*

## Le Balze

Walk along Via San Lino, through Porta San Francesco, and out Borgo Santo Stefano into Le Balze—an undulating landscape of yellow earth drawn into crags and gullies as if worn down by a desert torrent. This area was originally part of the Etruscan town (called Velathri; as usual, the current name is closer to the Roman name, Volaterrae), as evidenced by walls that extend 1 km (½ mile) toward the old Porta Menseri. Toward the end of the road, on the right, is the church of San Giusto (with terracotta statues of the town's patron saints). The church was built to replace an earlier church under which the earth had eroded. The haunting landscape is thought to be the result of rainwater wearing down the soil substructure. The bus for Borgo San Giusto, leaving from Piazza Martiri, goes through Le Balze (about 10 runs per day).



## r Restaurants

### Da Badò

\$ | TUSCAN | This is the best place in town to eat traditional food elbow-to-elbow with the locals. Da Badò is family-run, with Lucia in the kitchen and her sons Giacomo and Michele waiting tables. **Known for:** excellent traditional dishes; small menu; local favorite. [💰] *Average main: €14* [✉] *Borgo San Lazzaro 9* [📞] *0588/86477* [🌐] [www.trattoriadabado.com](http://www.trattoriadabado.com) [🕒] *Closed Wed.*

### Il Sacco Fiorentino

\$\$ | TUSCAN | Start with the *antipasti del Sacco Fiorentino*—a medley of sautéed chicken liver, porcini mushrooms, and polenta drizzled with balsamic vinegar. The meal just gets better when you move on to the *tagliatelle del Sacco Fiorentino*, a riot of curried spaghetti with chicken and roasted red peppers. **Known for:** inventive food; tranquil setting; excellent wine list. [💰] *Average main: €17* [✉] *Via Giusto Turazza 13* [📞] *0588/88537* [🕒] *Closed Wed.*

### ★ Osteria Fornelli

\$\$ | ITALIAN | It bills itself as an “osteria with a view,” and it delivers. The food is as amazing as the view; on offer are dishes with fantasy, and dishes that adhere to Volterranean tradition. **Known for:** daily lunch specials; unique ingredient combinations; attentive staff. [💰] *Average main: €17* [✉] *Piazzetta Fornelli 3* [📞] *0588/88641* [🌐] [www.osteriafornelli.it](http://www.osteriafornelli.it) [🕒] *Closed Tues.*

## h Hotels

### Etruria

\$ | B&B/INN | The rooms are modest and there’s no elevator, but the central location, the ample buffet breakfast, and the modest rates make this a good choice for those on a budget. **Pros:** great central location; friendly staff; tranquil garden with rooftop views. **Cons:** some rooms can be noisy during the day; a/c doesn’t exist in every room; no elevator. [💰] *Rooms from: €73* [✉] *Via Matteotti 32* [📞] *0588/87377* [🌐] [www.albergoetruria.it](http://www.albergoetruria.it) [🕒] *Closed Jan. and Feb.* [🛏] *18 rooms* [🕒] *Free breakfast.*

## San Lino

\$ | HOTEL | Within the town's medieval walls, this convent-turned-hotel has wood-beam ceilings, graceful archways, and terracotta floors, with nice contemporary furnishings and ironwork in the rooms. **Pros:** steps away from center of town; friendly and helpful staff; convenient parking. **Cons:** rooms facing the street can be noisy; breakfast is adequate, but nothing to write home about; though in the center, somewhat removed from things. [D] Rooms from: €100 ✉ Via San Lino 26 ☎ 0588/85250 🌐 [www.hotelsanlino.com](http://www.hotelsanlino.com) ⌵ Closed Nov.–Feb. ↗ 43 rooms 🍴 Free breakfast.

## p Performing Arts

### FESTIVALS

#### Astiludio festival

FESTIVALS | On the first Sunday in September the Astiludio festival celebrates a flag-throwing tradition that dates back to 1406. Performances and processions are part of the festivities. ✉ *Volterra*.

## b Shopping

### Anna Maria Molesini

CRAFTS | A large loom dominates this tiny workshop/showroom where scarves, shawls, throws, and jackets are woven. Anna Maria's work, mostly in mohair, is done in lively hues. ✉ Via Gramsci 45 ☎ 0588/88411 🌐 [www.arteinbottegavolterra.it](http://www.arteinbottegavolterra.it).

### Camillo Rossi

CRAFTS | At Camillo Rossi you can watch the artisans create household items in alabaster, and then buy their wares. ✉ Piazza della Peschiera 3 ☎ 0588/86133 🌐 [www.rossialabastri.com](http://www.rossialabastri.com).

### Cooperativa Artieri Alabastro

CRAFTS | The two large showrooms here are housed in medieval buildings

and contain a large number of alabaster objects for sale, including bookends, ashtrays, and boxes. ✉ *Piazza dei Priori 5* ☎ 0588/87590 🌐 [www.artierialabastro.it](http://www.artierialabastro.it).

### **Mercato** (*market*)

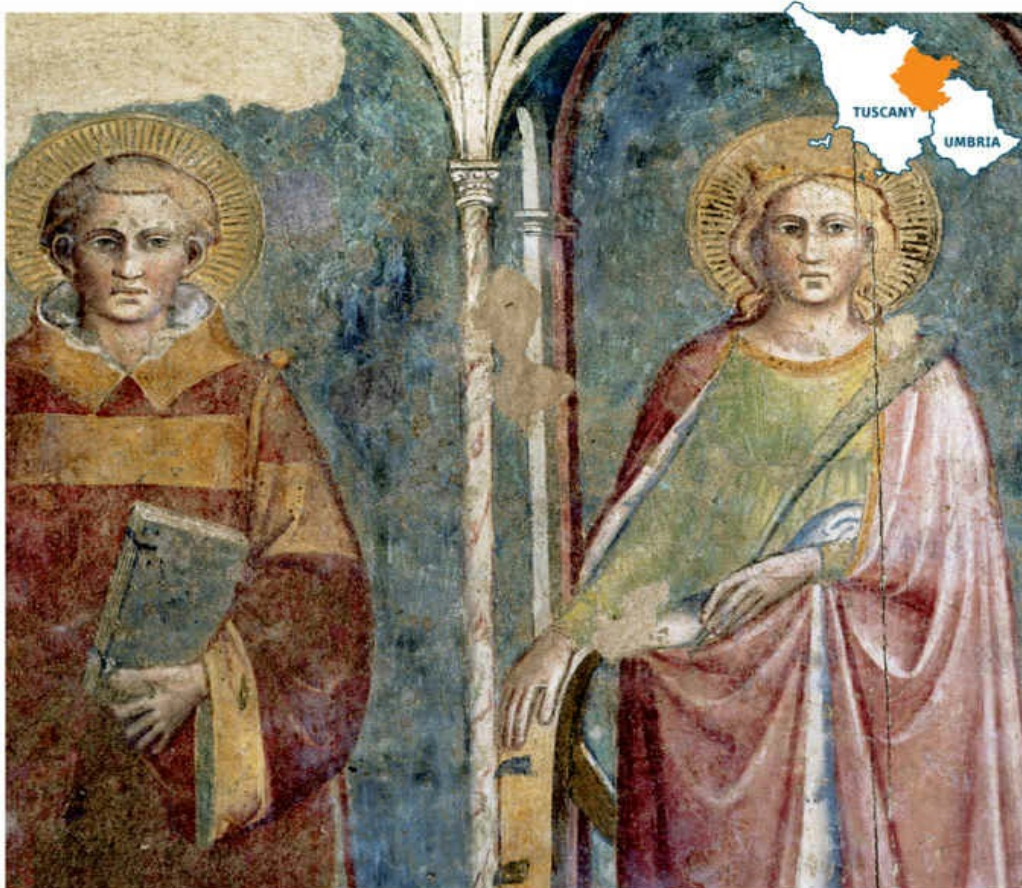
**OUTDOOR/FLEA/GREEN MARKETS** | Volterra's market is held on Saturday morning from November to April in Piazza dei Priori, and on Viale Ferrucci (just outside the city walls) from May through October. On hand are a selection of fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as vendors selling everything from corkscrews to *intimi* (underwear). ✉ *Volterra*.



## Chapter 6

# AREZZO, CORTONA, AND EASTERN TUSCANY

Updated by  
Patricia Rucidlo



 Sights  
★★★★★

 Restaurants  
★★★★☆

 Hotels  
★★★★☆

 Shopping  
★★★★☆

 Nightlife  
★★★★☆

# WELCOME TO AREZZO, CORTONA, AND EASTERN TUSCANY

## TOP REASONS TO GO

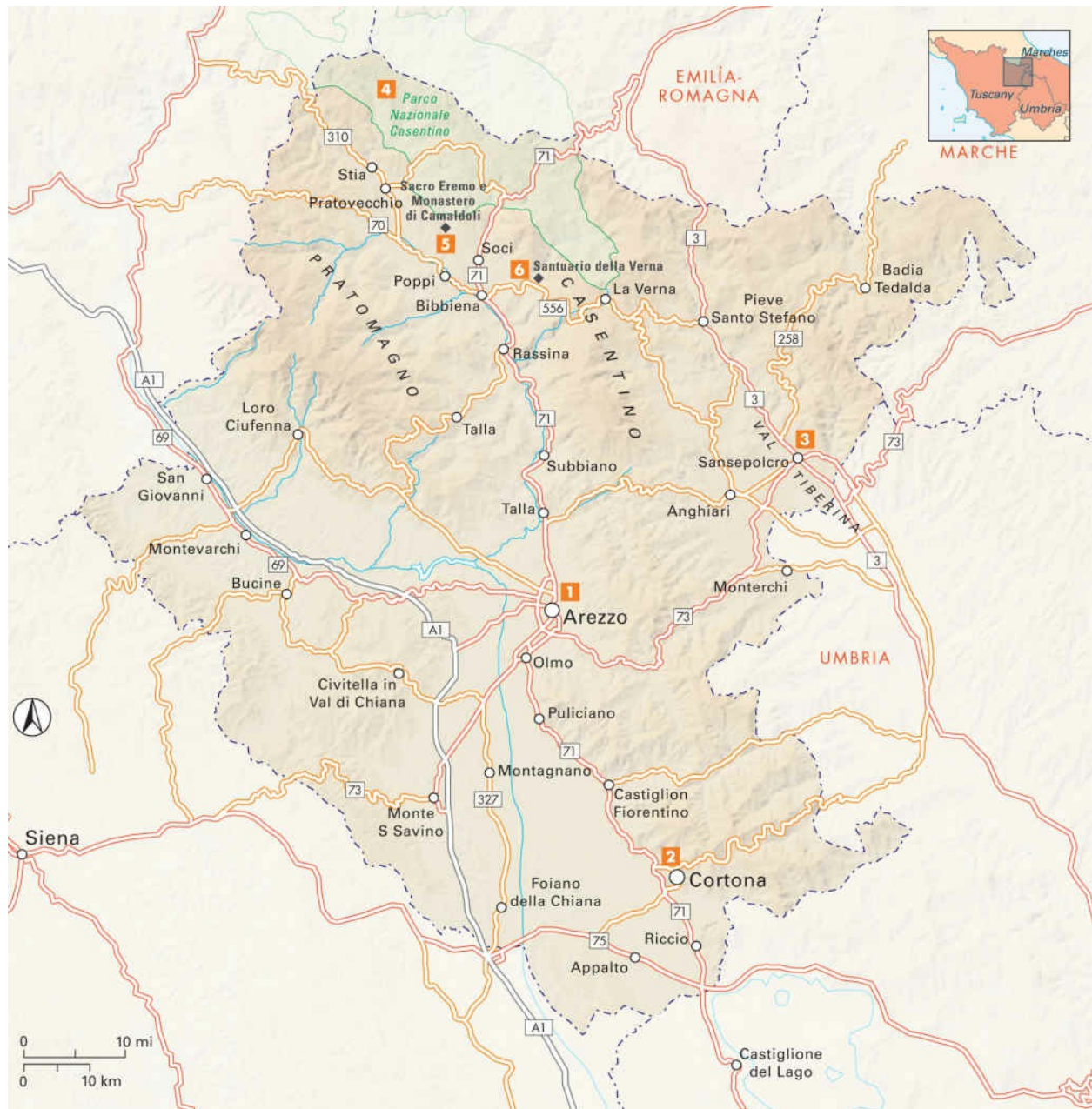
★ **Driving through the Parco Nazionale Casentino:** The vistas along the winding road of this park in the Casentino will not disappoint.

★ **Piero della Francesca's True Cross frescoes:** If your Holy Grail is great Renaissance art, seek out these 12 silently enigmatic scenes in Arezzo's Basilica di San Francesco.

★ **Santa Maria al Calcinaio:** The interior of this Cortona church is much like that of Florence's Duomo, and it's a prime example of Renaissance architecture.

★ **Shopping for jewelry in Arezzo:** Gold has been part of Arezzo's economy since Etruscan times, and today the town is well known worldwide for jewelry design.

The hill towns of Arezzo and Cortona are the main attractions of eastern Tuscany; despite their appeal, this part of the region gets less tourist traffic than its neighbors to the west. You'll truly escape the crowds if you venture north to the Casentino, which is backwoods Tuscany—tiny towns and abbeys are sprinkled through beautiful forestland, some of which is set aside as a national park.



**1 Arezzo.** Tuscany's third-largest city.

**2 Cortona.** This ancient stone town was made famous by the book *Under the Tuscan Sun*.

**3 Sansepolcro.** The birthplace of Piero della Francesca.

**4 Parco Nazionale Casentino.** A stunning National Park.

**5 Sacro Eremo E Monastero Di Camaldoli.** Monks live in silence in 20

cottages at this hermitage.

**6 Santuario Della Verna.** This sanctuary was founded by Saint Francis.



**Closer to Italy's rugged Apennines than any other part of the region, eastern Tuscany hides its secrets in the valleys of the upper Arno and Tiber rivers, and among mountains covered with forests of chestnut, fir, and beech: it was here, at La Verna, that St. Francis founded a sanctuary and received the signs of Christ's wounds, and Michelangelo first saw the light of day.**

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One of Tuscany's best "off-the-beaten-path" experiences, Parco Nazionale Casentino, is also here, with mountain scenery that has been safeguarded by monks for eight centuries. The area invites visitors seeking an experience far from the madding crowd. The hill towns of **Arezzo** and **Cortona** serve as introductions to the area. They carry on age-old local traditions—each June and September Arezzo's Romanesque and Gothic churches are enlivened by the Giostra del Saracino, a medieval pageant. Since ancient times, Arezzo has been home to important artists: from the Etruscan potters who produced those fiery-red vessels to the poet Petrarch and the writer, architect, and painter Giorgio Vasari. Cortona, magnificently situated, with olive groves and vineyards creeping up to its walls, commands sweeping views over Lago Trasimeno and the plain of the Valdichiana. The medieval streets are a pleasure to wander, and the town has two galleries and a scattering of churches that are worth a visit.

### **MAJOR REGIONS**

**Arezzo.** Tuscany's third-largest city feels a touch more cosmopolitan than the neighboring hill towns—meaning among other things that it has the best shopping in the region. The real draw, though, is the Basilica di San Francesco, adorned with frescoes by Piero della Francesca.

**Cortona.** This ancient stone town, made famous by the book *Under the Tuscan Sun*, sits high above the perfectly flat Valdichiana Valley, offering

great views of beautiful countryside.

**Sansepolcro.** Lovers of Renaissance painting make pilgrimages to out-of-the-way Sansepolcro, birthplace of Piero della Francesca. He often worked in, or near, his hometown, finding inspiration for the landscapes in his often enigmatic paintings.

**The Casentino.** A short distance north of Arezzo, the Casentino region is highlighted by the Parco Nazionale Casentino—a drive through the park reveals one gorgeous view after another. Dante, exiled here from Florence, recorded his love of the countryside in *The Divine Comedy*.

# Planner

## Making the Most of Your Time

Plan on spending a good four days to tour the area. Arezzo and Cortona each merit a full day, and if you stay in the vicinity you'll have a good base from which to explore the countryside. Both towns are close to the A1 (Autostrada del Sole) and are on main train lines.

## Getting Here and Around

### **BUS TRAVEL**

#### **Baschetti**

The bus company provides regular service between Arezzo and Sansepolcro. ☎ 0575/749816 in Sansepolcro 🌐 [www.baschetti.it](http://www.baschetti.it).

#### **BUSITALIA**

Bus service between Florence and Arezzo is provided three times daily by SITA, which also provides regular connections between Arezzo and Cortona. ☎ 055/47821 in Florence, 0575/74361 in Sansepolcro, 800/373760 toll-free in Italy 🌐 [www.fsbusitalia.it](http://www.fsbusitalia.it).

#### **Etruria Mobilità**

All bus service in the province of Arezzo is coordinated by Etruria Mobilità, a cooperative of seven different transport companies, including BUSITALIA and Baschetti; it's the best source for information about bus service to outlying towns in the region. ☎ 0575/39881 in Arezzo 🌐 [www.etruriamobilita.it](http://www.etruriamobilita.it).

### **CAR TRAVEL**

The best way to travel within the region, making it possible to explore tiny hill towns and country restaurants, is by car. The roads are better north–south than east–west, so allow time for excessively winding roads when heading

east or west. Sometimes it's faster to go out of your way and get on one of the bigger north–south routes.

The A1 highway, which runs from Florence to Rome, passes close to Arezzo. Cortona is just off the main road linking Perugia to the A1, and Sansepolcro can be reached from Arezzo on the SR73, with Monterchi a short 3-km (2-mile) detour along the way.

Though Arezzo is the third-largest city in Tuscany (after Florence and Pisa), the old town is small, and is on a low hill almost completely closed to traffic. Look for parking along the roads that circle the lower part of town, near the train station, and walk up into town from there.

In Cortona, the city center is completely closed to traffic and the few parking areas sprinkled outside the city walls don't make it easy to park. The majority of Cortona's streets are steep. Fortunately, most of the main sights are grouped near the Duomo in the lower part of town, but if you want to visit the upper town, be prepared for a stiff climb.

For visits to the mountainous National Park of the Casentino and the smaller towns and villages farther to the east, such as Sansepolcro and Monterchi, a car is almost a necessity: bus schedules can be difficult to plan around, and train service is either infrequent or nonexistent. All make for rewarding day trips, though a fair part of your time will be spent on winding, beautiful, country roads. If you want time to explore, plan to stay the night.

## TRAIN TRAVEL

### Trenitalia

The national railway system provides frequent trains between Florence and Arezzo. A regular service also links Arezzo with Cortona, and with Poppi and the Casentino. ☎ 892021 toll-free in Italy 🌐 [www.trenitalia.com](http://www.trenitalia.com).

## Hotels

A visit to Tuscany is a trip to the country. There are good hotels in Arezzo and Cortona, but for a classic experience stay in one of the rural accommodations—often converted villas, sometimes working farms or vineyards (known as *agriturismi*).

## What It Costs in Euros

\$

\$\$

\$\$\$

\$\$\$\$

### RESTAURANTS

under  
€15

€15–€24

€25–  
€35

over  
€35

### HOTELS

under  
€125

€125–  
€200

€201–  
€300

over  
€300

## Arezzo

Arezzo is best known for the magnificent Piero della Francesca frescoes in the church of San Francesco. It's also the birthplace of the poet Petrarch (1304–74), the Renaissance artist and art historian Giorgio Vasari, and Guido d'Arezzo (aka Guido Monaco), the inventor of contemporary musical notation. Arezzo dates from pre-Etruscan times, when around 1000 BC the first settlers erected a cluster of huts. Arezzo thrived as an Etruscan capital from the 7th to the 4th century BC, and was one of the most important cities in the Etruscans' anti-Roman 12-city federation, resisting Rome's rule to the last.

The city eventually fell and in turn flourished under the Romans. In 1248 Guglielmino degli Ubertini, a member of the powerful Ghibellines, was elected bishop of Arezzo. This sent the city headlong into the enduring conflict between the Ghibellines (pro-emperor) and the Guelphs (pro-pope). In 1289 Florentine Guelphs defeated Arezzo in a famous battle at Campaldino. Among the Florentine soldiers was Dante Alighieri (1265–1321), who often referred to Arezzo in his *Divine Comedy*. Guelph–Ghibelline wars continued to plague Arezzo until the end of the 14th century, when Arezzo lost its independence to Florence.

### GETTING HERE

Arezzo is easily reached by car from the A1, the main highway running between Florence and Rome. Direct trains connect Arezzo with Rome (2½ hours) and Florence (1 hour). Direct bus service is available from Florence, but not from Rome.

### VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS** **Arezzo Tourism Office.** ✉ *Piazza Libertà 2* ☎ 0575/5401945  
🌐 [www.arezointuscany.it](http://www.arezointuscany.it).

## S Sights

Sitting on a low hill in a wide plain, Arezzo, especially the bell tower of its Duomo, is visible from afar. Surrounding the older town is an area of urban sprawl. As you begin to walk along the narrow pedestrian streets inside the walls, however, the standard stores of the lower town are gradually replaced by the exclusive antiques and jewelry shops for which Arezzo is known, and the anonymous buildings of the new town give way to Renaissance town palaces, Romanesque and Gothic churches, and the medieval squares of the upper town—all of which is crowned, quite naturally, by the Duomo itself.

### **Anfiteatro Romano**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE | Periodic excavations since 1950 have brought to light segments of Arezzo's Roman amphitheater, which was probably built during the early 2nd century AD. The entire perimeter has been exposed, and you can see some of the entrance passages and the structures that supported the amphitheater's central arena. ✉ *Via Margaritone 10* ☎ 0575/20882.



## ★ Basilica di San Francesco

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | The famous Piero della Francesca frescoes depicting *The Legend of the True Cross* (1452–66) were executed on the three walls of the Capella Bacci, the apse of this 14th-century church. What Sir Kenneth Clark called “the most perfect morning light in all Renaissance painting” may be seen in the lowest section of the right wall, where the troops of Emperor Maxentius flee before the sign of the cross. Reservations are recommended June through September. ✉ [Piazza San Francesco 2](mailto:Piazza San Francesco 2) ☎ 0575/352727 🌐 [www.pierodellafrancesca-ticketoffice.it](http://www.pierodellafrancesca-ticketoffice.it) 🏠 €8.

## Casa di Giorgio Vasari



**HOUSE** | Giorgio Vasari (1511–74), the region’s leading mannerist artist, architect, and art historian, designed and decorated this house after he bought it in 1540. He ended up not spending much time here, since he and his wife moved to Florence in 1554. Today the building houses archives on Vasari, and works by the artist and his peers are on view. In the first room, which Vasari called the “Triumph of Virtue Room,” a richly ornamented wooden ceiling shows Virtue combating Envy and Fortune in a central octagon. ✉ [Via XX Settembre 55](mailto:Via XX Settembre 55) ☎ 0575/352727 🌐 [www.museistataliarezzo.it/museo-casa-vasari](http://www.museistataliarezzo.it/museo-casa-vasari) 📄 €4.

## Duomo

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | Arezzo’s medieval cathedral at the top of the hill contains a fresco of a tender *Maria Maddalena* by Piero della Francesca (1420–92); look for it in the north aisle next to the large marble tomb near the organ. Construction of the Duomo began in 1278 but twice came to a halt, and the church wasn’t completed until 1510. The ceiling decorations and the stained-glass windows date from the 16th century. The facade, designed by Arezzo’s Dante Viviani, was added later (1901–14). ✉ [Piazza del Duomo 1](mailto:Piazza del Duomo 1) ☎ 0575/23991.

## Museo Archeologico

**MUSEUM** | The Archaeological Museum in the **Convento di San Bernardo**, just outside the **Anfiteatro Romano**, exhibits a fine collection of Etruscan bronzes. ✉ [Via Margaritone 10](mailto:Via Margaritone 10) ☎ 0575/352727 🌐 [www.museistataliarezzo.it/museo-archeologico-gaio-cilnio](http://www.museistataliarezzo.it/museo-archeologico-gaio-cilnio) 📄 €6.

## Piazza Grande

**PLAZA** | With its irregular shape and sloping brick pavement, framed by buildings of assorted centuries, Arezzo’s central piazza echoes Siena’s Piazza del Campo. Though not quite so magnificent, it’s lively enough during the outdoor antiques fair the first weekend of the month and when the **Giostra del Saracino** (Saracen Joust), featuring medieval costumes and competition, is held here on the third Saturday of June and on the first Sunday of September. ✉ [Piazza Grande](mailto:Piazza Grande).

## San Domenico

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | Inside the northern city walls, this church was begun by Dominican friars in 1275 and completed in the 14th century. The walls were once completely frescoed and decorated with niches and chapels. Very little remains of the original works, but a famous 13th-century crucifix by Cimabue (circa 1240–1302) and frescoes by Spinello Aretino (1350–1410) still remain. ✉ *Piazza San Domenico 7* ☎ 0575/22906.

### **Santa Maria della Pieve** (*Church of Saint Mary of the Parish*)

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | The curving, tiered apse on Piazza Grande belongs to a fine Romanesque church that was originally an Early Christian structure, which had been constructed over the remains of a Roman temple. The church was rebuilt in Romanesque style in the 12th century. The splendid facade dates from the early 13th century but includes granite Roman columns. A magnificent polyptych, depicting the Madonna and Child with four saints, by Pietro Lorenzetti (circa 1290–1348), embellishes the high altar. ✉ *Corso Italia 7*.

## **r Restaurants**

### **Caffè dei Costanti**

\$ | **ITALIAN** | Outdoor seating on Arezzo's main pedestrian square and a tasty range of chef's salads (named after the servers) make this a very pleasant spot for a light lunch during a tour of town. If you're here in the early evening, the dei Costanti serves up an ample buffet of snacks to accompany predinner aperitifs. **Known for:** perfect location across from Basilica di San Francesco; very fine cappuccini; tasty snacks. 💰 *Average main: €6* ✉ *Piazza San Francesco 19* ☎ 0575/1824075 🌐 [www.caffedeicostanti.it](http://www.caffedeicostanti.it) 🕒 *Closed Wed.*

### ★ **I Tre Bicchieri**

\$\$ | **SEAFOOD** | Chef Luigi Casotti hails from Amalfi and this shows through in his fine adaptations of dishes, notably seafood, more commonly served near the Bay of Naples. Two well-priced tasting menus are available. **Known for:** creative menu including two tasting menus; superlative wine list; notable chef. 💰 *Average main: €18* ✉ *Piazzetta Sopra i Ponti 3–5* ☎ 0575/26557 🌐 [www.ristoranteitrebicchieri.com](http://www.ristoranteitrebicchieri.com) 🕒 *Closed Sun. (except 1st weekend of*

month).

### La Lancia d'Oro

\$\$ | ITALIAN | Fantastic food is to be had at this cheery, intimate trattoria with a view of Piazza Grande. An inventive menu has Tuscan classics; other dishes have unusual flavor combinations, and a superb wine list offers great pairings with the food. **Known for:** fantastic pastas; desserts; stellar staff. [D] Average main: €24 ✉ Piazza Grande 18 ☎ 0575/21033 ☺ No dinner Sun. Closed Mon.

### La Torre di Gnicche

\$ | ITALIAN | Wine lovers shouldn't miss this wine bar/eatery, just off Piazza Grande, with more than 700 labels on the list. Seasonal dishes of traditional fare, such as *acquacotta del casentino* (porcini mushroom soup) and *baccalà in umido* (salt-cod stew), are served in the simply decorated, vaulted dining room. **Known for:** the extensive wine list, with many choices by the glass; an ever-changing menu; outdoor seating in warm weather. [D] Average main: €10 ✉ Piaggia San Martino 8 ☎ 0575/352035 🌐 [www.latorredignicche.it](http://www.latorredignicche.it) ☺ Closed Wed., and Jan.

## h Hotels

### ★ Calcione

\$ | B&B/INN | FAMILY | This six-century-old family estate (circa 1483) now houses sophisticated rustic lodgings; many of the apartments have open fireplaces, and the stone houses have a private pool (the rest share the estate pool). **Pros:** houses sleep up to 10; private lakes for fishing and windsurfing; quiet, beautiful, remote setting. **Cons:** private transportation is a must—nearest village is 8 km (5 miles) away; no a/c; minimum one-week stay in season. [D] Rooms from: €98 ✉ Località Il Calcione 102, 26 km (15 miles) southwest of Arezzo, Lucignano ☎ 0575/837153 🌐 [www.calcione.com](http://www.calcione.com) ☺ Closed Dec.–Feb. ↗ 30 rooms 🍴 No meals.

### ★ Castello di Gargonza

\$\$ | HOTEL | FAMILY | Enchantment reigns at this tiny 13th-century

countryside hamlet, part of the fiefdom of the aristocratic Florentine Guicciardini family and reinvented by the modern Count Roberto Guicciardini. **Pros:** romantic, one-of-a-kind accommodation in a medieval castle; peaceful, isolated setting; on-site restaurant. **Cons:** standard rooms are extremely basic; a little out of the way for exploring the region; private transportation is a necessity. [D] Rooms from: €170 [✉] SR73, Località Gargonza, 32 km (19 miles) southwest of Arezzo, Monte San Savino [☎] 0575/847021 [🌐] [www.gargonza.it](http://www.gargonza.it) [🕒] Closed 2nd week of Jan.–Mar. [🏠] 47 rooms [🍳] Free breakfast.

### ★ Il Borro

\$\$\$\$ | HOTEL | The location has been described as “heaven on earth,” and a stay at this elegant Ferragamo estate, with a 10-bedroom villa (rented out as a single unit) that was once a luxurious hunting lodge, and nearby a medieval village is sure to bring similar descriptions to mind. **Pros:** exceptional service; great location for exploring eastern Tuscany; unique setting and atmosphere. **Cons:** off the beaten track, making private transport a must; not all suites have country views; very expensive. [D] Rooms from: €640 [✉] Località Il Borro 1, outside village of San Giustino Valdarno, 20 km (12 miles) northwest of Arezzo [☎] 055/977053 [🌐] [www.ilborro.it](http://www.ilborro.it) [🕒] Closed Dec.–Mar. [🏠] 39 rooms [🍳] Free breakfast.

## b Shopping

Ever since Etruscan goldsmiths set up their shops here more than 2,000 years ago, Arezzo has been famous for its jewelry. Today the town lays claim to being one of the world’s capitals of jewelry design and manufacture, and you can find an impressive display of big-time baubles in the town center’s shops. Arezzo is also famous for its antiques dealers.

### ANTIQUES

The first weekend of every month, between 8:30 and 5:30 each day, a colorful flea market selling antiques and not-so-antiques takes place in the town’s main square, **Piazza Grande**.

## Grace Gallery

ANTIQUES/COLLECTIBLES | Look for antique jewelry, furniture, and paintings at this gallery. ✉ *Via Cavour 30* ☎ 0575/354963.

## JEWELRY

### Mariasole Gioielli

JEWELRY/ACCESSORIES | Precious gems, pearls, and coral in fanciful floral settings are offered here. ✉ *Corso Italia 51* ☎ 0575/1483702 🌐 [www.mariasolegioielli.com](http://www.mariasolegioielli.com).

## Cortona

Made popular by Frances Mayes's book *Under the Tuscan Sun* and film of the same name, Cortona is no longer the destination of just a few specialist art historians and those seeking reprieve from busier tourist venues. The main street, Via Nazionale, is now lined with souvenir shops and fills with crowds during summer. Though the main sights of Cortona make braving the bustling center worthwhile, much of the town's charm lies in its maze of quiet backstreets. It's here that you will see laundry hanging from windows, find children playing, and catch the smell of simmering pasta sauce. Wander off the beaten track and you won't be disappointed.

Cortona is called "Mother of Troy and Grandmother of Rome" in popular speech, and may be one of Italy's oldest towns. Tradition claims it was founded by Dardanus, the founder of Troy (after whom the Dardanelles are named). He was fighting a local tribe, the story goes, when he lost his helmet (*corythos* in Greek) on Cortona's hill. In time a town grew up that took its name (Corito) from the missing headgear. By the 4th century BC the Etruscans had built town walls, the traces of which can still be seen in the 3-km (2-mile) sweep of the present fortifications. As a member of the Etruscans' 12-city league, Cortona became one of the federation's leading northern cities. The area's major road, the Via Cassia, passed the foot of Cortona's hill, maintaining the town's importance under the Romans. Medieval fortunes waned, however, as the plain below reverted to marsh. After holding out against Perugia, Arezzo, and Siena, the *commune* was captured by King Ladislas of Naples in 1409 and sold to the Florentines.

### **GETTING HERE**

Cortona is easily reached by car from the A1 highway: take the Valdichiana exit toward Perugia, then follow signs for Cortona. Regular bus service, provided by Etruria Mobilità, is available between Arezzo and Cortona (one hour). Train service to Cortona is made inconvenient by the location of the train station, in the valley 3 km (2 miles) steeply below the town itself. From there, you have to rely on bus or taxi service to get up to Cortona.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS Cortona Tourism Office.** ✉ Piazza Signorelli 9 📞  
0575/637223 🌐 [www.comunedicortona.it](http://www.comunedicortona.it).

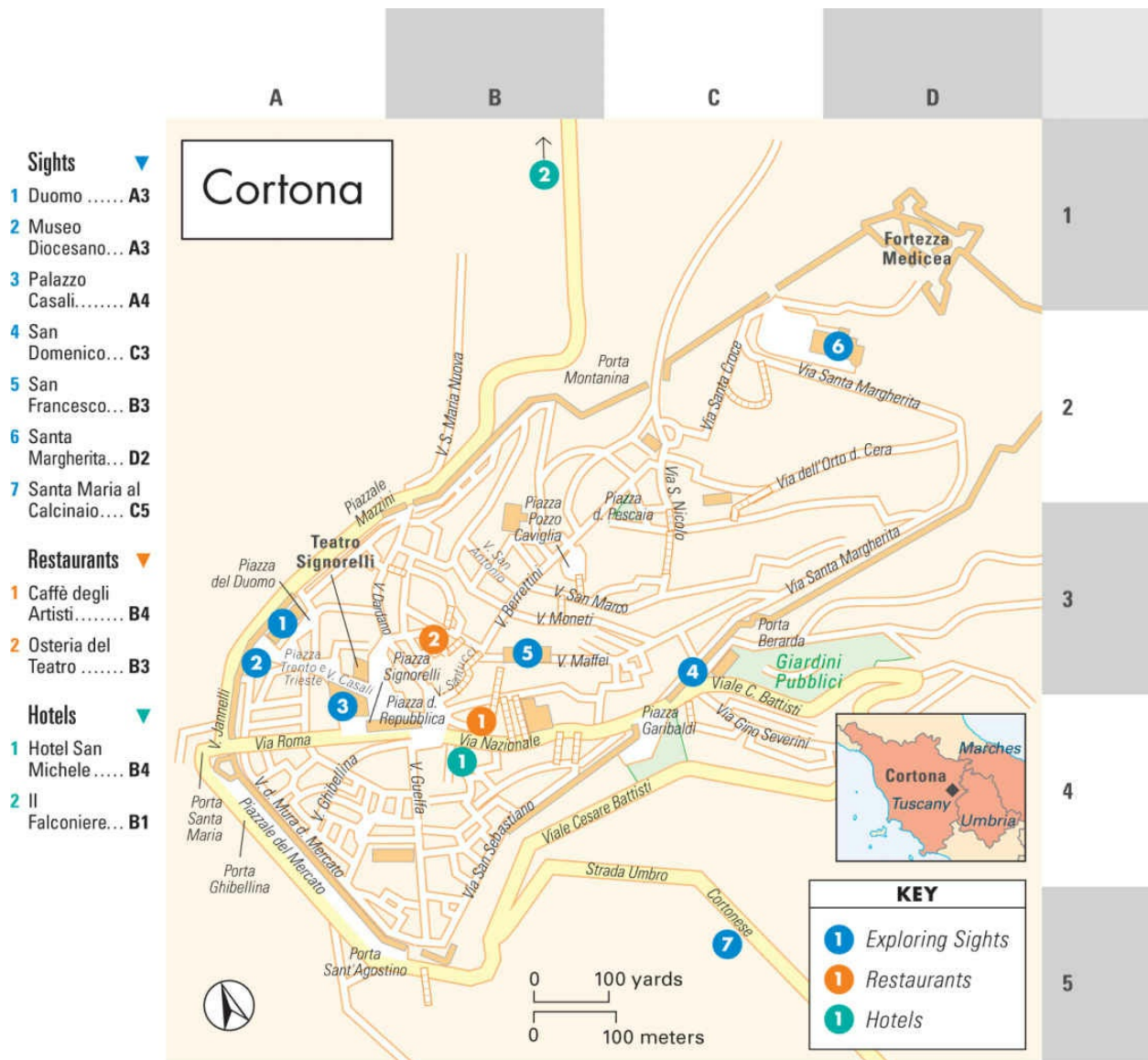
## S Sights

### Duomo

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | Cortona's cathedral stands on an edge of the city, next to what's left of the Etruscan and medieval walls. Built on the site of a Romanesque church, the present Renaissance church was begun in 1480 and finished in 1507. An arcade along the outside wall was erected in the 16th century. The interior, a mixture of Renaissance and Baroque styles, features an exquisite 1664 Baroque tabernacle on the high altar by Francesco Mazzuoli. ✉ *Piazza Duomo 1.*

### Museo Diocesano

**MUSEUM** | Housed in part of the original cathedral structure, this nine-room museum houses an impressive number of large, splendid paintings by native son Luca Signorelli (1445–1523), as well as a beautiful *Annunciation* by Fra Angelico (1387/1400–55), which is a delightful surprise in this small town. The church was built between 1498 and 1505 and restructured by Giorgio Vasari in 1543. Frescoes depicting sacrifices from the Old Testament by Doceno (1508–56), based on designs by Vasari, line the walls. ✉ *Piazza Duomo 1* 📞 0575/62830 🌐 [www.diocesiarezzo.it](http://www.diocesiarezzo.it) 🏠 €5 ☹️ *Closed Tues.*



## Palazzo Casali

**CASTLE/PALACE** | Built originally by the Casali family, who lived here until 1409, this palace is home to the Accademia Etrusca, with an extensive library; **La Biblioteca Comunale**; and the **Museo dell'Accademia Etrusca e della Città di Cortona (aka MAEC)**. An eclectic mix of Egyptian objects, Etruscan and Roman bronzes and statuettes, and paintings is on display in the museum. Perhaps the most famous piece is the Tabula Cortonensis, an Etruscan contract written on bronze that was found in 1922 but dates back to the second century BC. Look for work by Renaissance artists such as Luca Signorelli and Pinturcchio (circa 1454–1513). From May through September, guided tours are available in English with prior arrangement. ✉ *Piazza*



Signorelli 9 ☎ 0575/630415 🌐 [www.cortonamaec.org](http://www.cortonamaec.org) 📧 €10 🕒 Closed  
Mon. Nov.–Mar.

### San Domenico

RELIGIOUS SITE | Inside this rather nondescript 14th-century church, just outside Cortona's walls, is an altarpiece depicting the *Coronation of the Virgin* against a sparkling gold background by Lorenzo di Niccolò Gerini (active late 14th–early 15th century). Among the other works is a *Madonna and Child* by Luca Signorelli. ✉ *Largo Beato Angelico 1* ☎ 0575/603217.

### San Francesco

RELIGIOUS SITE | In the mid-13th century, this Gothic-style church was built on the site of Etruscan and Roman baths. It is decorated with frescoes that date from 1382, a 17th-century crucifix by Giuseppe Piamontini of Florence, and houses a Relic of the Santa Croce, a vestige of the True Cross apparently given to Brother Elia when he served as an envoy for Federico II in Constantinople. The church's rather beautiful organ was unfortunately badly damaged during WWII. ✉ *Via Berrettini 4* ☎ 0575/603205.

### Santa Margherita

RELIGIOUS SITE | The large 1897 basilica was constructed over the foundation of a 13th-century church dedicated to the same saint. What makes the 10-minute uphill walk worthwhile is the richly decorated interior. The body of the 13th-century St. Margherita—clothed but with skull and bare feet clearly visible—is displayed in a case on the main altar. ✉ *Piazzale Santa Margherita 1* ☎ 0575/603116.

### Santa Maria al Calcinaio

RELIGIOUS SITE | Legend has it that the image of the Madonna appeared on a wall of a medieval *calcinaio* (lime pit used for curing leather), the site on which the church was then built between 1485 and 1513. The linear gray-and-white interior recalls Florence's Duomo. Siennese architect Francesco di Giorgio (1439–1502) most likely designed the sanctuary: the church is a terrific example of Renaissance architectural principles. ✉ *Località Il Calcinaio 227, 3 km (2 miles) southeast of Cortona's center.*

## r Restaurants

### Caffe degli Artisti

\$ | CAFÉ | If you need a break from sightseeing, this is a pleasant place to stop for a cappuccino, sandwiches at lunchtime, or the array of appetizers set out during the cocktail hour. In the summer months a few outdoor tables are set up directly on Via Nazionale, Cortona's main pedestrian street, and provide a great perch for those who love to people-watch. **Known for:** outdoor dining; people-watching; perfect for cocktail hour. [📍] *Average main: €6* [✉] *Via Nazionale 18* [📞] 0575/601237.

### Osteria del Teatro

\$\$ | TUSCAN | Photographs from theatrical productions spanning many years line the walls of this tavern off Cortona's large Piazza del Teatro. The food is simply delicious—try the *filetto al lardo di colonnata e prugne* (beef cooked with bacon and prunes); service is warm and friendly. **Known for:** food that's in season; lively atmosphere; pretty dining room. [📍] *Average main: €18* [✉] *Via Maffei 2* [📞] 0575/630556 [🌐] [www.osteria-del-teatro.it](http://www.osteria-del-teatro.it) [🕒] *Closed Wed., and 2 wks in Nov.*

## h Hotels

### Hotel San Michele

\$\$ | HOTEL | Cortona might tempt you to step back in time and stay there awhile, and the spacious, beamed, richly furnished rooms in a 15th-century palazzo in the center of town provide the perfect hideaway. **Pros:** lovely surroundings in perfect hill town location; character-filled rooms; excellent service, including valet parking. **Cons:** limited views from some rooms; some street noise; some find it overpriced. [📍] *Rooms from: €152* [✉] *Via Guelfa 15* [📞] 0575/604348 [🌐] [www.hotelsanmichele.net](http://www.hotelsanmichele.net) [🏠] 40 rooms [🕒] *Free breakfast.*

### ★ Il Falconiere

\$\$\$ | B&B/INN | Accommodation options at this sumptuous property include

rooms in an 18th-century villa, suites in the *chiesetta* (chapel, or little church), or for more seclusion, Le Vigne del Falco suites at the far end of the property. **Pros:** attractive setting in the valley beneath Cortona; excellent service; elegant, but relaxed; restaurant and cooking school. **Cons:** a car is a must; some find rooms in main villa a little noisy; might be too isolated for some. 💰 Rooms from: €249 ✉ Località San Martino 370, 3 km (2 miles) north of Cortona ☎ 0575/612679 🌐 [www.ilfalconiere.com](http://www.ilfalconiere.com) 🕒 Closed Nov. 3–Mar. 27 🛏 26 rooms 🍴 Free breakfast.

## b Shopping

### **l'Antico Cocciaio**

CERAMICS/GLASSWARE | For nice ceramics, with many pieces depicting the brilliant sunflowers that blanket local fields, check here. ✉ Via Benedetti 24 ☎ 0575/605294 🌐 [www.lanticococciaio.com](http://www.lanticococciaio.com).

# Sansepolcro

40 km (25 miles) northeast of Arezzo.

Originally called *Borgo San Sepolcro* (City of the Holy Sepulchre), this sprawling agricultural town takes its name from relics brought here from the Holy Land by two pilgrims in the 10th century. Today, inside a circle of 15th-century walls, the gridded street plan hints at the town's ancient Roman origins. Known as the birthplace of Piero della Francesca—several of his paintings are displayed in the town's Civic Museum—the old center of Sansepolcro retains a distinctly medieval air, with narrow streets lined with churches and 15th-century palaces.

## GETTING HERE

Traveling to Sansepolcro by either car or bus from Arezzo is to be preferred over the journey by train, which can take up to four hours. By car, follow the SS73; if traveling by bus (1 hour), check with Etruria Mobilità for the schedule, though service is infrequent.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS** **Sansepolcro tourism office.** ✉ *Via Matteotti 8* 📞  
0575/740536 🌐 [www.valtiberinaintoscana.it](http://www.valtiberinaintoscana.it).

## S Sights

### Duomo

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | In a combination of Romanesque and Gothic styles, Sansepolcro's cathedral, though somewhat austere, contains some significant works of art. These include the *Volto Santo*, a wooden sculpture of the 9th century, which is believed to be the earliest crucifix depicting a completely clothed Christ on the cross. The *Ascension of Christ*, by Perugino (circa 1448–1523), and its neighbor, an *Assumption of the Virgin*, by Jacopo Palma the Younger (circa 1550–1628) are also highlights. ✉ *Via Matteotti 1–3*.

## Monterchi

**TOWN** | This sleepy town, sitting on a small knoll about 15 km (9 miles) south of Sansepolcro, would probably attract little attention if it were not for the fact that Piero della Francesca stopped here to paint one of his greatest masterpieces in the 1450s. ✉ *Sansepolcro*.

## Museo Civico

**MUSEUM** | Piero della Francesca is the star at this small provincial museum. Three—possibly four—of his works are on display: the reassembled altarpiece of the *Misericordia* (1445–62) and frescoes depicting the *Resurrection* (circa 1460), *Saint Julian*, and the disputed *Saint Louis of Toulouse*, which is possibly the work of a close follower of the artist. Other works of interest are those by Santi di Tito (1536–1603), also from Sansepolcro, and Pontormo's *San Quintino* (1517–18). ✉ *Via Aggiunti 65* 📞 0575/732218 🌐 [www.museocivicosansepolcro.it](http://www.museocivicosansepolcro.it) 📮 €10.

## Museo della Madonna del Parto

**MUSEUM** | Not surprisingly, only one painting is displayed here, Piero's *Madonna del Parto* (circa 1455), a fresco depicting the expectant Virgin flanked by two angels. Originally painted for the small chapel of Santa Maria a Momentana in Monterchi's cemetery, the work was restored in 1992–93 and moved, shortly thereafter, into the museum. The iconography of the image is extremely rare and, emphasized by its static atmosphere and studied symmetry, the fresco achieves an extraordinary sense of enigmatic and monumental spirituality. ✉ *Via Reglia 1* 📞 0575/70713 🌐 [www.madonnadelparto.it](http://www.madonnadelparto.it) 📮 €7; *pregnant women are admitted free of charge.*

# Parco Nazionale Casentino

*Pratovecchio: 55 km (34 miles) north of Arezzo, 50 km (31 miles) east of Florence.*

## GETTING HERE

You'll need a car to explore this area: getting here by bus, though surprisingly easier from Florence than it is from Arezzo, is a complicated process; it's impossible by train.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

### Park information office

In addition to this office, there are branch offices at Camaldoli (*Località Camaldoli 19*) and Stia (*Piazza Tanucci, no phone*). ✉ *Via Giodo Brocchi 7, Pratovecchio* ☎ 0543/50301 🌐 [www.parcoforestecasentinesi.it](http://www.parcoforestecasentinesi.it).

## S Sights

### Foreste Casentinesi

**NATIONAL/STATE PARK** | A drive through the park, especially on the very winding 34-km (21-mile) road between the Monastero di Camaldoli and Santuario della Verna, passing through the lovely abbey town of Badia Prataglia, reveals one satisfying vista after another, from walls of firs to velvety pillows of pastureland where sheep or white cattle graze. In autumn the beeches add a mass of red-brown to the palette, and in spring torrents of bright golden broom pour off the hillsides with an unforgettable profusion and fragrance. Walking the forests—which also include sycamore, lime, maple, ash, elm, oak, hornbeam, and chestnut trees and abundant brooks and impressive waterfalls—is the best way to see some of the wilder creatures, from deer and mouflon (wild sheep imported from Sardinia in 1872) to eagles and many other birds, as well as 1,000 species of flora, including many rare and endangered plants and an orchid found nowhere else. The park organizes theme walks in summer and provides English-speaking guides anytime with

advance notice.  0575/50301  [www.parcoforestecasentinesi.it](http://www.parcoforestecasentinesi.it).

# Sacro Eremo e Monastero di Camaldoli

20 km (12 miles) northeast of Pratovecchio, 55 km (34 miles) north of Arezzo.

## GETTING HERE

As with the Casentino National Park in general, the only practical way to reach the hermitage and monastery is by car: take SP71 to Serravalle, then follow the signs. Bus service is infrequent and the schedule is tortuous; train service is nonexistent.

## S Sights

### Sacro Eremo e Monastero di Camaldoli

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | In 1012, four centuries after the foundation of the Benedictine order, St. Romualdo—feeling that his order had become too permissive—came to the forests of the Casentino and found their remoteness, beauty, and silence conducive to more appropriate religious contemplation. He stayed and founded a hermitage, the **Sacro Eremo di Camaldoli** (named for Count Maldoli, who donated the land), which became the seat of a reformed Benedictine order. An important requirement of the new order was preserving its ascetic atmosphere: “If the hermits are to be true devotees of solitude, they must take the greatest care of the woods.” When the flow of pilgrims began to threaten that solitude, Romualdo had a monastery and hospital built down the mountain to create some distance. Today you can view the hermitage—where the monks live in complete silence in 20 separate little cottages, each with its own walled garden—through gates, and visit the church and original cell of Romualdo, the model for all the others. The church, rebuilt in the 13th century and transformed in the 18th to its present appearance, strikes an odd note in connection with such an austere order and the simplicity of the hermits’ cells, because it’s done up in gaudy Baroque style, complete with gilt cherubs and a frescoed vault. Its most appealing artwork is the glazed terracotta relief *Madonna and Child with Saints* (including a large figure of Romualdo and a medallion depicting his fight



with the devil) by Andrea della Robbia. The main entrance to the hermitage, the bronze *Porta Speciosa* (Beautiful Door) of 2013, by Claudio Parmiggiani (born in 1943), has an inscription on its inner side that likens the monks' spirits to the trees that they tend.

Within the **Monastero di Camaldoli**, 3 km (1 mile) away, is a church (repeatedly restructured) containing 14th-century frescoes by Spinello Aretino, seven 16th-century panel paintings by Giorgio Vasari, and a quietly lovely monastic choir. The choir has 18th-century walnut stalls, more Vasari paintings, and a serene fresco (by Santi Pacini) of St. Romualdo instructing his white-robed disciples. In a hospital built for sick villagers in 1046, the 1543 **Antica Farmacia** (Old Pharmacy) contains original carved walnut cabinets. Here you can buy herbal teas and infusions, liqueurs, honey products, and toiletries made by the monks from centuries-old recipes as part of their daily routine balancing prayer, work, and study (the monastery is entirely self-supporting). In the back room is an exhibit of the early pharmacy's alembics, mortars, and other equipment with which the monks made herbs into medicines. You can attend short spiritual retreats organized by the monks throughout the year: contact the *foresteria* (visitors lodge) for details. ✉ *Località Camaldoli 14, Poppi* ☎ 0575/556021 *Eremo*, 0575/556012 *Monastero*, 0575/556013 *Foresteria* 🌐 [www.camaldoli.it](http://www.camaldoli.it) 📧  
*Donation suggested.*

# Santuario della Verna

34 km (21 miles) southeast of Monastero di Camaldoli and of Pratovecchio.

## GETTING HERE

The only practical way to reach the sanctuary is by car—it's a windy 21 km (13 miles) east of Bibbiena on SP208. There is no direct bus service, and train service is nonexistent.

## S Sights

### Caprese Michelangelo

**TOWN** | Some 10 km (6 miles) south of La Verna on SR54 is the small hilltop town where Michelangelo Buonarroti, sculptor, painter, architect, and poet, was born on March 6, 1475. ✉ *La Verna*.

### Museo Michelangiolesco

**MUSEUM** | Opened in 1964 to honor the 400th anniversary of Michelangelo's death, the museum displays photographs, plaster casts, and documents relating to the artist's work. ✉ *Via Capoluogo 1, La Verna* ☎ 0575/793776 🌐 [www.casanatalemichelangelo.it](http://www.casanatalemichelangelo.it) 📄 €4 🕒 Closed weekdays Nov. 2–Dec. 24.

### Sagra della Castagna (Chestnut Festival)

**FESTIVAL** | During two weekends in mid-October, Caprese Michelangelo's very lively Sagra della Castagna takes place. Among the many other chestnut-based delights that feature in the fair, the freshly made *castagnaccia* (a typically Tuscan dessert made with chestnut flour, pine nuts, olive oil, and rosemary) is a must-try. ✉ *Tourist office, La Verna* ☎ 0575/793760 🌐 [www.capresemichelangelo.net](http://www.capresemichelangelo.net).

### Santuario della Verna

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | A few hills away from the Monastero di Camaldoli, dramatically perched on a sheer-walled rock surrounded by firs and beeches,

is La Verna, founded by St. Francis of Assisi in 1214. Ten years later, after a 40-day fast, St. Francis had a vision of Christ crucified, and when it was over, Francis had received the stigmata, the signs of Christ's wounds, on his hands, feet, and chest. A stone in the floor of the 1263 Chapel of the Stigmata marks the spot. A covered corridor through which the monks pass, chanting in a solemn procession each day at 3 pm on the way to Mass, is lined with simple frescoes of the *Life of St. Francis* by a late-17th-century Franciscan artist. The true artistic treasures of the place, though, are 15 della Robbia glazed terracottas. Most, like a heartbreakingly beautiful Annunciation, are in the 14th- to 15th-century basilica, which has a 5,000-pipe organ that sings out joyously at Masses.

Several chapels, each with its own story, can be visited, and some natural and spiritual wonders can also be seen. A walkway along the 230-foot-high cliff leads to an indentation where the rock is said to have miraculously melted away to protect St. Francis when the devil tried to push him off the edge. Most touching is the enormous Sasso Spicco (Projecting Rock), detached on three sides and surrounded with mossy rocks and trees, where St. Francis meditated. You can also view the Letto di San Francesco (St. Francis's Bed), a slab of rock in a cold, damp cave with an iron grate on which he prayed, did penance, and sometimes slept. A 40-minute walk through the woods to the top of Mt. Penna passes some religious sites and ends in panoramic views of the Arno Valley, but those from the wide, cliff-edge terrace are equally impressive, including the tower of the castle in Poppi, the Prato Magno (great meadow), and the olive groves and vineyards on the lower slopes. Santuario della Verna's foresteria also has simple but comfortable rooms with or without bath. A restaurant (\$) with basic fare is open to the public, and a shop sells souvenirs and the handiwork of the monks.

As you leave La Verna, be glad you needn't do it as Edith Wharton (1862–1937) did on a 1912 visit during a drive across the Casentino. As she wrote, her car “had to be let down on ropes to a point about  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile below the monastery, Cook [her chauffeur] steering down the vertical descent, and twenty men hanging on to a funa [rope] that, thank the Lord, didn't break.”✉  
21 km (13 miles) east of Bibbiena on the Sp 208, Via del Santuario 45, La Verna ☎ 0575/5341 🌐 [www.santuariolaverna.org](http://www.santuariolaverna.org).



## Chapter 7

# SOUTHERN TUSCANY

Updated by  
Patricia Rucidlo



 Sights  
★★★★★

 Restaurants  
★★★★☆

 Hotels  
★★★★☆

 Shopping  
★★★★☆

 Nightlife  
★★★★☆

# WELCOME TO SOUTHERN TUSCANY

## TOP REASONS TO GO

★ **Pienza's urban renewal:** A 15th-century makeover turned this otherwise unpretentious village into a model Renaissance town.

★ **Saturnia's hot water:** The gods themselves reportedly had a hand in creating the springs at this world-famous spa town.

★ **Napoléon's home in exile:** The island of Elba, where the French leader was once imprisoned, is among the prettiest island in the Tuscan archipelago.

★ **Wine tastings in Montepulciano:** This gorgeous town also happens to be the home of one of Italy's finest wines—Vino Nobile di Montepulciano.

★ **A stroll through Abbazia di Sant'Antimo:** This 12th-century Romanesque abbey shows French, Lombard, and even Spanish influences.

Southeast of Siena, not far from the Umbrian border, the towns of Montepulciano, Montalcino, and Pienza are Tuscan classics—perched on hills, constructed during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and saturated with fine wine. Venture farther south and you encounter Tuscany with a rougher edge: the Maremma region is populated by cowboys, and a good portion of the landscape remains wild. But you won't forget you're in Italy here; the wine is still excellent, and some locals store their supply in Etruscan tombs.



- 1 Chiusi.** Filled with 5th-century artifacts.
- 2 Chianciano Terme.** Visitors flock to its healing waters.
- 3 Montepulciano.** Its high altitude means cool summers.
- 4 Pienza.** Planned by Pope Pius II.
- 5 San Quirico D'Orcia.** See Romanesque churches here.
- 6 Bagno Vignoni.** Famous for its sulfurous waters.
- 7 Montalcino.** This town produces Brunello di Montalcino wine.
- 8 Abbazia Di Sant'Antimo.** 12th-century Romanesque abbey.
- 9 Buonconvento.** The death place of Holy Roman Emperor Henry VII.
- 10 Abbazia Di Monte Oliveto Maggiore.** Most-visited abbey in Tuscany.

- 11 **Asciano.** A sleepy, bike-friendly town.
- 12 **Monte Amiata.** Ski its namesake slope, a dormant volcano.
- 13 **Sorana.** A former Etruscan citadel carved from tufa.
- 14 **Pitigliano.** A lively, trendy town.
- 15 **Sovana.** The area's former capital.
- 16 **Saturnia.** Relax in its thermal waters.
- 17 **Parco Naturale Della Maremma.** A nature preserve.
- 18 **Monte Argentario.** Come for beaches and views of the mountains.
- 19 **Massa Marittima.** Former mining town.
- 20 **Abbazia Di San Galgano.** A Gothic cathedral in beautiful ruins.
- 21 **Giglio.** A romantic isle.
- 22 **Elba.** The largest island of the Tuscan archipelago.
- 23 **Capraia.** An island frequented by sailors.



**As diverse as Italy itself, southern Tuscany ranges from the green knolls of the Val d'Orcia to the sandy beaches at Punta Ala. It contains the wildest parts of Tuscany—the Maremma, once a malaria-ridden swampland where the butteri, Italy's cowboys, rounded up their cattle, now a peaceful woodland fringed with beaches; Monte Amiata, a scruffy mountain landscape where goats gnaw at clumps of brown grass among scattered rocks; and the still-wild islands of the Tuscan archipelago. Some of Tuscany's best-kept secrets lie here in the south, among them the Abbazia di San Galgano, which is open to the sky, and the cool mountain enclaves of Monte Amiata. This is Etruscan country, where the necropolis near Sovana hints at a rich and somewhat mysterious pre-Roman civilization.**

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Apart from the occasional rocky promontory, the coast of southern Tuscany is virtually one long stretch of fine-sand beach. Private beach areas are common near the resort towns south of Livorno and just north of Monte Argentario, where there are chairs and umbrellas for rent, shower facilities, and bars. Along the rest of the coast, the beaches are public. They're particularly pleasant in the nature reserve at Monti dell'Uccellina and along the sandbars that connect Monte Argentario to the mainland. On the islands, rocky shores predominate, although Elba has a few sandy beaches on its southern side.

You can visit the whole region in about five days. Keep in mind that southern

Tuscany isn't well served by trains, so if you aren't renting a car you'll have to plan around sometimes difficult bus schedules, and the going will be slow. The A1 (Autostrada del Sole), which runs from Florence to Rome, passes near the Val d'Orcia. The SS1 (Via Aurelia) follows the western coastline for much of the way, before jutting inland north of Grosseto.

## MAJOR REGIONS

**Val d'Orcia.** In the area surrounding this lush valley you'll find some of southern Tuscany's most attractive towns. **Montalcino** and **Montepulciano** are famed for their wine, **Pienza** for its urban planning and pecorino cheese.

**Le Crete.** South of Siena, the stark clay landscape and unassuming towns are interrupted by **Abbazia di Monte Oliveto Maggiore**, the most-visited abbey in Tuscany.

**The Maremma.** Tuscany's deep south may not conform to your expectations for the region; it's best known for its cattle ranches and coastline. "Discovering" the Maremma has become popular with off-the-beaten-path travelers, though you hardly have to rough it here—you'll find exceptional food and wine, and the spa town of Saturnia is all about indulgence.

**Elba and the Surrounding Islands.** It's a short hop from the coast to the islands of the Tuscan archipelago. Several of them—most notably Elba—have long been vacation getaways.

# Planner

## Making the Most of Your Time

The towns in southern Tuscany are fairly close together, so it's possible to pick one of them as your base and take day trips to almost everywhere else in the region. **Pienza**, in the middle of the **Val d'Orcia**, makes an excellent place to begin your trip. Other good choices include **Montepulciano** and **Montalcino**. From any of these it's only a short drive to all the other towns in the Val d'Orcia, as well as the famous abbeys in and around **Le Crete**.

If your main reason for visiting this region is a dip in the hot springs, you should stay in **Saturnia** or one of the surrounding villages. (Because so many people go there for a soak, Saturnia has the most luxurious lodgings.)

If your destination is the Tuscan archipelago, you'd do best to choose one island, as there is no ferry service between them. **Elba** is more famous, but it's hard to find a place to lay your towel in the summer months. **Giglio** has less-crowded beaches, and a few accessible on foot or by boat that you might have to yourself.

## Getting Here and Around

### **BUS TRAVEL**

Although tortuous roads and circuitous routes make bus travel in southern Tuscany slow, it's a reliable way to get around if you don't have a car. Schedules are always changing, so plan your trip carefully with the aid of local tourist offices. (They're more likely to have an English-speaking staff than are bus stations.) The major bus stations for the region are in Siena and Grosseto, but most towns have bus service even if they don't have actual bus stations.

### **BUSITALIA**

This bus company provides regular rapid service between Florence and

Siena. ☎ 055/47827 in Florence 🌐 [www.fsbusitalia.it](http://www.fsbusitalia.it).

## CTT

With an office in Portoferraio, the company provides bus service around Elba. ☎ 0565/882602 🌐 [www.livorno.cttnord.it](http://www.livorno.cttnord.it).

## RAMA

Based in Grosseto, the company provides bus service throughout the Maremma region. ☎ 0564/475111 🌐 [www.griforama.it](http://www.griforama.it).

## Tra-In

Bus service throughout the province of Siena is provided by Tra-In. ☎ 0577/204111 🌐 [www.trainspa.it](http://www.trainspa.it).

## CAR TRAVEL

The area is easily reached by car on the A1 highway (Autostrada del Sole), which runs between Rome and Florence—take the Chiusi–Chianciano Terme exit for Montepulciano, Pienza, and San Quirico Val d’Orcia. From Florence the fastest route to southern Tuscany is via the Florence–Siena Superstrada and then the Via Cassia (SR2) from Siena for Buonconvento and Montalcino. There is also a good road (SR223) linking Siena and Grosseto, for outings to the Parco Naturale della Maremma and Monte Argentario.

From Genoa or the northern Tuscan coast, follow the coastal highway (A12) to reach Livorno and its ferry service to Capraia. For direct ferry service to Elba, continue south on the SS1 (the Via Aurelia) to reach Piombino. Past Piombino, the SS1 passes Grosseto, the Parco Naturale della Maremma, and Monte Argentario, before continuing south toward Rome.

## TRAIN TRAVEL

Train service within this region is slow; in many cases buses are quicker. Trains run from Chiusi–Chianciano Terme to Siena (one hour) with stops in Montepulciano and Asciano.

## Trenitalia

You can check the website of the state railway for train schedules, or stop in

any travel agency—many speak English and will book and print train tickets for you. ☎ 06/68475475 🌐 [www.trenitalia.com](http://www.trenitalia.com).

## Hotels

Southern Tuscany is a great place to enjoy the *agriturismo* (agrotourism) lifestyle: if you have a week to stay in one of these rural farmhouses, pick somewhere central, such as Pienza, and explore the region from that base. It may be so relaxing and the food so good that you might have trouble wandering away.

You will also find many hotels in this region: modern affairs in cities, surf-side beach resorts, and timeworn villas.

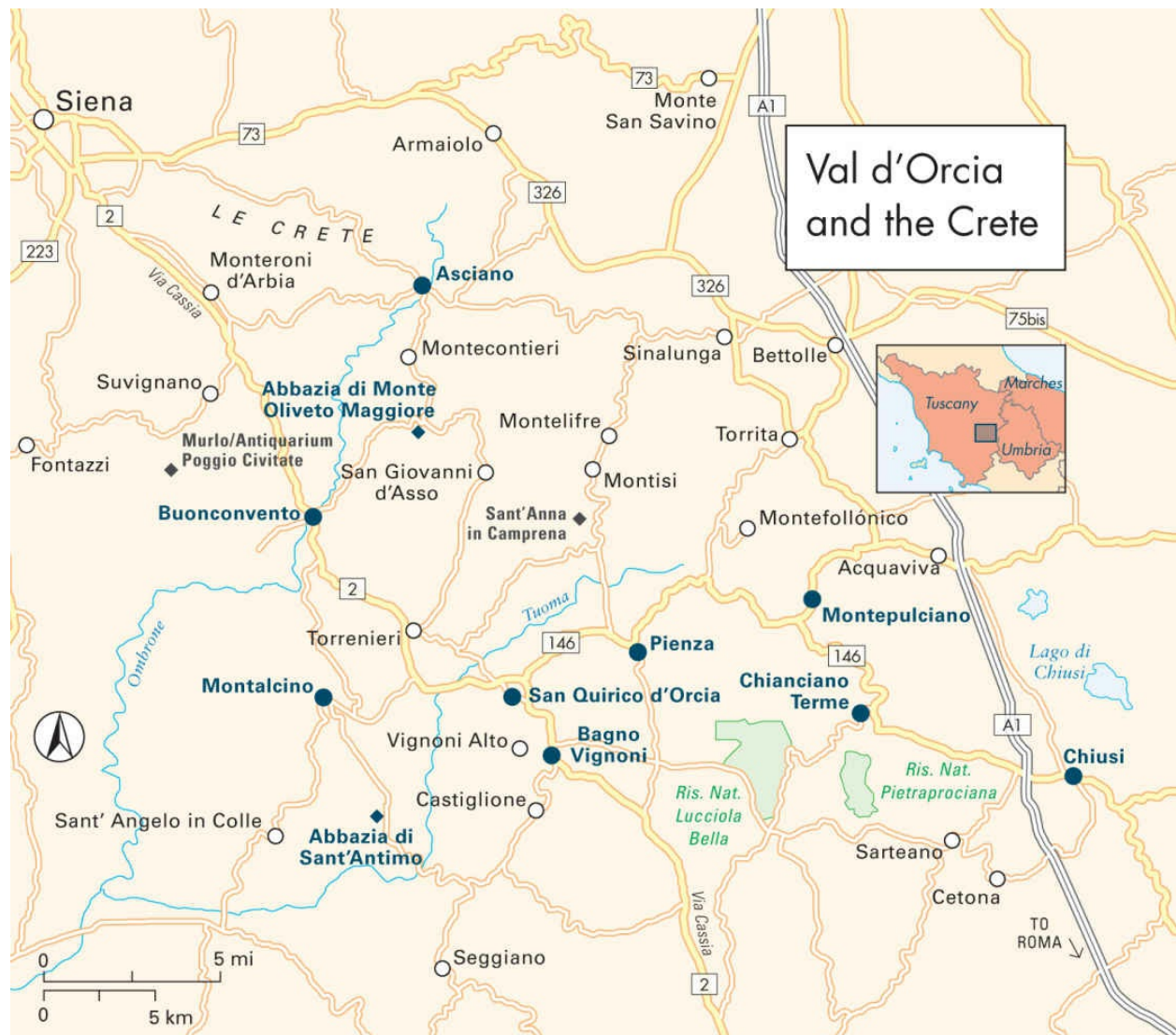
## What It Costs in Euros

\$	\$\$	\$\$\$	\$\$\$\$
<b>RESTAURANTS</b>			
under €15	€15–€24	€25– €25	over €35
<b>HOTELS</b>			
under €125	€125– €200	€201– €300	over €300

## Chiusi

*40 km (25 miles) south of Cortona, 84 km (50 miles) southeast of Siena, 126 km (78 miles) southeast of Florence.*

Chiusi was once one of the most powerful of the ancient cities of the Etruscan League, and it's now a valuable source of information about that archaic civilization. Fifth-century BC tombs found in the nearby hills have provided archaeologists with a wealth of artifacts. On the route of the ancient Via Cassia, Chiusi became a major Roman center and an important communication hub that linked Rome with the agriculturally rich Chiana Valley to the east, with Siena to the northwest, and to other major cities in central and northern Italy. When the Chiana Valley became a malaria-ridden swamp during the Middle Ages, Chiusi's importance declined, and it was not until the Medici devised a scheme to drain the valley (with plans supplied by Leonardo da Vinci) in the early 15th century that the town began to reestablish itself.



## GETTING HERE

Chiusi is easily reached by car on the A1 highway (Autostrada del Sole), which runs between Rome and Florence. Tra-In buses link Chiusi with Siena, but train service is faster and more frequent. Chiusi is on a main rail line between Florence and Rome, and can be reached from either city.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS** Chiusi tourism office. ✉ *Via Porsena 79* ☎ *0578/227667* 🌐 [www.prolocochiusi.it](http://www.prolocochiusi.it).

## S Sights

### Museo Nazionale Etrusco

**MUSEUM** | Most of the artifacts found during the excavations of Chiusi's Etruscan sites are now on display in this small but expertly laid out museum. Relics include elegant Etruscan and Greek vases, carved Etruscan tomb chests, and a number of the strange canopic jars with anthropomorphic shapes that are particular to this area. The tombs themselves can be seen by arrangement with the museum; visits are accompanied by a member of the museum staff. These underground burial chambers are still evocative of ancient life, particularly in the Tomba della Scimmia (Tomb of the Monkey), where well-preserved frescoes depict scenes from ordinary life 2,500 years ago. The Tomba del Leone (Tomb of the Lion) and Tomba della Pellegrina (Tomb of the Pilgrim) are open at set times during museum hours. ✉ *Via Porsenna 93* ☎ *0578/20177* 🌐 [www.prolocochiusi.it](http://www.prolocochiusi.it) 🚗 *From €6.*



# Chianciano Terme

*11 km (7 miles) northwest of Chiusi, 73 km (44 miles) southeast of Siena.*

People from around the world come to the *città del fegato sano* (city of the healthy liver) to experience the curative waters. The area's innumerable mineral-water springs are reputed to restore and maintain the health of the skin, among other things. This is nothing new; as early as the 5th century BC Chianciano Terme was the site of a temple to Apollo the Healer. It's no secret, either—the Terme di Chianciano spa alone claims to draw 120,000 visitors a year, and Italian state health insurance covers visits to the baths and springs for qualified patients. But you can test the waters yourself at a number of springs. If you're not here for the waters, probably the most interesting part of Chianciano is the old town, which lies to the north. The modern town, stretching along a hillside to the south, is a series of hotels, shops, and restaurants catering to spa aficionados.

## GETTING HERE

From Rome or Florence, Chiusi is easily reached by car on the A1 highway (Autostrada del Sole). Tra-In buses link Chianciano with Siena. The closest train station to Chianciano Terme is in Chiusi, about 15 km (9 miles) away.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS** **Chianciano Terme tourism office.** ✉ *Piazza Italia 67* ☎  
*0578/671122* 🌐 [www.terresiena.it](http://www.terresiena.it).

## S Sights

### Cetona

**TOWN** | Follow SP19 past Sarteano and continue on SP21 to reach this delightful village. Time may seem to have stopped as you walk along the quiet, narrow, medieval lanes and back alleys. Peer through the locked gate for a glimpse of the privately owned castle, and take in splendid views of

olive orchards, cypress groves, and the quiet wooded slopes of Mt. Cetona from the town's terraced streets. ☒ *20 km (12 miles) southeast of Chianciano Terme.*

## Chianciano

**TOWN** | This walled medieval town, 3 km (2 miles) northeast of Chianciano Terme, is best known for its proximity to the nearby spas; nevertheless, the well-preserved center has an appeal all of its own. ☒ *Chianciano Terme.*

## Museo Civico Archeologico

**MUSEUM** | This museum contains a good collection of Etruscan and Roman sculpture and pottery excavated from around the area. According to cognoscenti, this is among the best of Etruscan objects in Italy. ☒ *Viale Dante* ☎ *0578/30471* 🌐 *www.museoetrusco.it* 💰 *€5* 🕒 *Closed Tues.–Thurs.*

## San Martino in Foro

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | Don't miss this small church, which houses a striking Annunciation by the important Sienese painter Domenico Beccafumi (1486–1551). ☒ *Piazza San Martino, Sarteano.*

## Sarteano

**TOWN** | To the southeast of Chianciano, 10 km (6 miles) along SP19, lies this relatively unspoiled village that dates from the 12th and 13th centuries. The town's narrow streets, which wind slowly up toward an imposing fortress, now privately owned, make for very pleasant strolling. ☒ *Chianciano Terme* 🌐 *www.terresiena.it.*

## Terme di Chianciano

**HOT SPRINGS** | This spa has two buildings with a large park in the middle and three types of water: Acqua Santa, Acqua Fucoli, and Acqua Sillene. (Mud baths happen at the last.) The Terme website lists the varied spa treatments available. The all-important water is served up at long counters, where the spa staff is always ready to refill your glass. Be warned: The mineral water can have a cleansing effect on your system that may come on suddenly. ☒ *Via delle Rose 12* ☎ *0578/68501* 🌐 *www.termechianciano.it.*

## Terme Sant'Elena

**HOT SPRINGS** | The waters here are said to help with kidney and urinary-tract ailments and all manner of digestive disorders; there are bocce courts and a pretty park to stroll in while you sip. On summer afternoons you can dance to live orchestra music in the park. ✉ *Viale dell Libertà 112* ☎ *0578/31141* 🌐 [www.acquasantelena.it](http://www.acquasantelena.it) 🗨 *Mid-Apr.–May, €7; June–Sept., €8.*

# Montepulciano

*10 km (6 miles) northeast of Chianciano Terme, 65 km (40 miles) southeast of Siena, 114 km (70 miles) southeast of Florence.*

Perched on a hilltop, Montepulciano is made up of a pyramid of redbrick buildings set within a circle of cypress trees. At an altitude of almost 2,000 feet, it is cool in summer and chilled in winter by biting winds sweeping down its spiraling streets. The town has an unusually harmonious look, the result of the work of three architects: Antonio da Sangallo “il Vecchio” (circa 1455–1534), Vignola (1507–73), and Michelozzo (1396–1472). The group endowed it with fine palaces and churches in an attempt to impose Renaissance architectural ideals on an ancient Tuscan hill town.

## GETTING HERE

From Rome or Florence, take the Chiusi–Chianciano exit from the A1 highway (Autostrada del Sole). From Siena, take the SR2 south to San Quirico and then the SP146 to Montepulciano. Tra-In offers bus service from Siena to Montepulciano several times a day. Montepulciano’s train station is in Montepulciano Stazione, 10 km (6 miles) away.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS Montepulciano Tourism Office.** ✉ Piazza Don Minzoni 1 ☎  
0578/757341 🌐 [www.prolocomontepulciano.it](http://www.prolocomontepulciano.it)

## S Sights

### Duomo

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | On the Piazza Grande the unfinished facade of Montepulciano’s cathedral doesn’t measure up to the beauty of its neighboring palaces. On the inside, however, its Renaissance roots shine through. The high altar has a splendid triptych painted in 1401 by Taddeo di Bartolo (circa 1362–1422), and you can see fragments of the tomb of

Bartolomeo Aragazzi, secretary to Pope Martin V, which was sculpted by Michelozzo between 1427 and 1436. ✉ *Piazza Grande*.

## Palazzo Comunale

CASTLE/PALACE | Montepulciano's town hall dates to the late 13th century, though it was restructured in the 14th century and again in the mid-15th century. Michelozzo oversaw this last phase, using the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence as his inspiration. From the tower, a commanding view of Siena, Mt. Amiata (the highest point in Tuscany), and Lake Trasimeno (the largest lake on the Italian peninsula) can be enjoyed on a clear day. ✉ *Piazza Grande 1* 📞 0578/757341 🚩 *Free*.

## Piazza Grande

PLAZA | Filled with handsome buildings, this large square on the heights of the old historic town is Montepulciano's pièce de résistance. ✉ *Piazza Grande*.

## ★ San Biagio

BUILDING | Designed by Antonio da Sangallo il Vecchio, and considered his masterpiece, this church sits on the hillside below the town walls and is a model of High Renaissance architectural perfection. Inside the church is a painting of the Madonna that, according to legend, was the only thing remaining in an abandoned church that two young girls entered on April 23, 1518. The girls saw the eyes of the Madonna moving, and that same afternoon so did a farmer and a cow, who knelt down in front of the painting. In 1963 the image was proclaimed the Madonna del Buon Viaggio (Madonna of the Good Journey), the protector of tourists in Italy. ✉ *Via di San Biagio* 📞 0578/757341.

## Sant'Agostino

RELIGIOUS SITE | Michelozzo had a hand in creating the beautiful travertine facade on the church of Sant'Agostino, which was built in 1285 and renovated in the early 1400s. He also sculpted the terracotta relief of the Madonna and Child above the entrance. ✉ *Piazzale Pasquino da Montepulciano 6* 📞 0578/757341.

## r Restaurants

### La Dolce Vita

\$\$ | WINE BAR | An elegantly restored monastery is home to the excellent enoteca in the upper part of Montepulciano, which has a wide selection of wines by the glass. **Known for:** exquisite food that pairs beautifully with their wines; graceful service; serene setting. [💰] *Average main: €15* [✉] *Via di Voltaia nel Corso 80/82* [📞] 0578/896259 [🌐] [www.enotecaladolcevita.it](http://www.enotecaladolcevita.it) [🚫] *No credit cards.*

### ★ La Grotta

\$\$ | TUSCAN | You might be tempted to pass right by the innocuous entrance across the street from San Biagio, but you'd miss some fantastic food. This tasty menu relies heavily on local classics turned out to perfection. **Known for:** creative menu; local wine list; stellar service. [💰] *Average main: €23* [✉] *Via di San Biagio 15* [📞] 0578/757479 [🌐] [www.lagrottamontepulciano.it](http://www.lagrottamontepulciano.it) [🕒] *Closed Wed., and mid-Jan.–mid-Mar.*

### Osteria del Conte

\$ | TUSCAN | As high in Montepulciano as you can get, just behind the Duomo, this small and intimate restaurant is expertly run by the mother-and-son team of Lorena and Paolo Brachi. Passionate about the food they prepare, both have a flair for the region's traditional dishes. **Known for:** picci all'aglione (handmade spaghetti with garlic sauce); filetto ai funghi porcini (steak with porcini mushrooms); fresh fish served Friday. [💰] *Average main: €10* [✉] *Via di San Donato 19* [📞] 0578/756062 [🌐] [www.osteriadelconte.it](http://www.osteriadelconte.it) [🕒] *Closed Wed.*

## h Hotels

### La Terrazza

\$ | B&B/INN | On a quiet street in the upper part of town, these unpretentious lodgings are given sparkle by the welcoming and friendly service of the owners, Roberto and Vittoria Giardinelli. **Pros:** friendly family atmosphere; quiet central location; great value for money. **Cons:** no a/c; no night porter;

books up quickly. ☎ Rooms from: €95 ✉ Via del Piè al Sasso 16 ☎ 0578/757440 🌐 [www.laterrazzadimontepulciano.it](http://www.laterrazzadimontepulciano.it) ➡ 10 rooms 🍴☪ Free breakfast.

### ★ Podere Dionora

\$\$\$ | B&B/INN | At this secluded and serene country inn, earth-tone fabrics complement antiques in the individually decorated rooms, all of which have functioning fireplaces. **Pros:** secluded setting; great views; attentive service. **Cons:** long walk to the nearest town; need a car to get around; books up quickly. ☎ Rooms from: €280 ✉ Via Vicinale di Poggiano 9, 3 km (2 miles) east of Montepulciano town center ☎ 0578/717496 🌐 [www.dionora.it](http://www.dionora.it) ⌵ Closed mid-Dec.–mid-Mar. ➡ 6 rooms 🍴☪ Free breakfast.

## p Performing Arts

### Cantiere Internazionale d'Arte

MUSIC FESTIVALS | This festival of art, music, and theater takes place in a variety of venues during July and August, ending with a dramatic stage production in the Piazza Grande. ✉ Via Fiorenzuola Vecchia 5 ☎ 0578/757089 ticket office 🌐 [www.fondazionecantiere.it](http://www.fondazionecantiere.it).

# Pienza

*12 km (7 miles) west of Montepulciano, 52 km (31 miles) southeast of Siena, 120 km (72 miles) southeast of Florence.*

Pienza owes its appearance to Pope Pius II (1405–64), who had grand plans to transform his hometown of Corsignano—its former name—into a compact model Renaissance town. The man entrusted with the transformation was Bernardo Rossellino (1409–64), a protégé of the great Renaissance architectural theorist Leon Battista Alberti (1404–72). His mandate was to create a cathedral, a papal palace, and a town hall that adhered to the vainglorious pope’s principles. Gothic and Renaissance styles were fused, and the buildings were decorated with Sienese paintings. The net result was a project that expressed Renaissance ideals of art, architecture, and civilized living in a single scheme: it stands as an exquisite example of the architectural canons that Alberti formulated in the early Renaissance and that were utilized by later architects, including Michelangelo, in designing many of Italy’s finest buildings and piazzas. Today the cool nobility of Pienza’s center seems almost surreal in this otherwise unpretentious village, renowned for its smooth sheep’s-milk pecorino cheese.

## GETTING HERE

From Siena, drive south along the SR2 to San Quirico d’Orcia and then take the SP146. The trip should take just over an hour. Tra-In shuttles passengers between Siena and Pienza. There is no train service to Pienza.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS Pienza tourism office.** ✉ *Piazza Dante 18* ☎ *0578/749071* 🌐 [www.pienza.info](http://www.pienza.info).

## S Sights

### Duomo



**BUILDING** | This 15th-century cathedral was built by the architect Bernardo Rossellino (1409-64) under the influence of Leon Battista Alberti. The travertine facade is divided in three parts, with Renaissance arches under the pope's coat of arms encircled by a wreath of fruit. Inside, the cathedral is simple but richly decorated with Sieneese paintings. The building's perfection didn't last long—the first cracks appeared immediately after the building was completed, and its foundations have shifted slightly ever since as rain erodes the hillside behind. You can see this effect if you look closely at the base of the first pier as you enter the church and compare it with the last. ✉ *Piazza Pio II* 📞 0578/749071.

### Museo Diocesano

**MUSEUM** | This museum sits to the left of Pienza's Duomo. It's small but has a few interesting papal treasures and rich Flemish tapestries. The most precious piece is a rare mantle woven in gold with pearls and embroidered religious scenes that belonged to Pope Pius II. ✉ *Corso Il Rossellino 30* 📞 0578/749905 🌐 [www.palazzoborgia.it](http://www.palazzoborgia.it) 🏠 €5 🕒 Closed Tues.

### Palazzo Piccolomini

**BUILDING** | In 1459 Pius II commissioned Rossellino to design the perfect palazzo for his papal court. The architect took Florence's Palazzo Rucellai by Alberti as a model and designed this 100-room palace. Three sides of the building fit perfectly into the urban plan around it, while the fourth, looking over the valley, has a lovely loggia uniting it with the gardens in back. Guided tours departing every 30 minutes take you to visit the papal apartments, including a beautiful library, the Sala delle Armi (with an impressive weapons collection), and the music room, with its extravagant wooden ceiling forming four letter Ps, for Pope, Pius, Piccolomini, and Pienza. The last tour departs 30 minutes before closing. ✉ *Piazza Pio II* 📞 0577/286300 🌐 [www.palazzopiccolominipienza.it](http://www.palazzopiccolominipienza.it) 🏠 €7 🕒 Closed early Jan.–mid-Feb., mid-Nov.–late Nov.

## r Restaurants

### La Chiocciola

\$\$ | TUSCAN | Take the few minutes to walk from the old town for typical Pienza fare, including homemade picci with hare or wild-boar sauce. The restaurant's version of *formaggio in forno* (baked cheese) with assorted accompaniments such as fresh porcini mushrooms is reason enough to venture here. **Known for:** beloved by locals; simple, well-prepared food; good wine list. 💰 *Average main: €16* ✉ *Via Mencatelli 2* 📞 *0578/748683* 🌐 [www.trattorialachiocciola.it](http://www.trattorialachiocciola.it) 🕒 *Closed Fri., and Feb.*

### Osteria Sette di Vino

\$ | TUSCAN | Tasty dishes based on the region's cheeses are the specialty at this simple and inexpensive osteria on a quiet, pleasant square in the center of Pienza. Try versions of picci or the starter of radicchio baked quickly to brown the edges. **Known for:** pecorino tasting menu; bean soup; lively proprietor. 💰 *Average main: €10* ✉ *Piazza di Spagna 1* 📞 *0578/749092* 🚫 *No credit cards* 🕒 *Closed Wed., July 1–15, and Nov.*

## h Hotels

### ★ Agriturismo Cerreto

\$ | B&B/INN | FAMILY | Built a short distance from Pienza in the 18th and 19th centuries, this group of farm buildings is now done in traditional Tuscan decor with terracotta flooring, wood beams, wrought-iron beds, and heavy oak furniture in the nine apartments. **Pros:** peaceful country setting; great for families and small groups; good base for exploring the Val d'Orcia. **Cons:** private transportation a must; closest restaurants and town 5 km (3 miles) away; some think it a bit overpriced. 💰 *Rooms from: €110* ✉ *Strada Provinciale per Sant'Anna in Camprena, 5 km (3 miles) north of Pienza* 📞 *0578/749121* 🌐 [www.agriturismocerreto.com](http://www.agriturismocerreto.com) 📧 *9 apartments* 🍳 *Free breakfast.*

# San Quirico d’Orcia

*9½ km (5½ miles) southwest of Pienza, 43 km (26 miles) southeast of Siena, 111 km (67 miles) southeast of Florence.*

San Quirico d’Orcia, on the modern Via Cassia (SR2) south from Siena toward Rome, has almost-intact 15th-century walls topped with 14 turrets. The pleasantly crumbling appearance of the town recalls days of yore. It’s well suited for a stop to enjoy a gelato or a meal and to see its Romanesque church.

## GETTING HERE

From Siena, San Quirico d’Orcia is an hour-long drive on the SR2. Tra-In provides buses from Siena to San Quirico. There is no train service to San Quirico.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS** **San Quirico d’Orcia tourism office.** ✉ *Piazza Chigi 2* 📞 0577/899711 🌐 [www.comunesanquirico.it](http://www.comunesanquirico.it).

## S Sights

### Collegiata

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | The 13th-century Collegiata church has three majestic portals, one possibly the work of Giovanni Pisano (circa 1245/48–1318). Behind the high altar are some fine examples of inlaid woodwork by Antonio Barilli (1482–1502). In the floor of the left aisle, look for the tomb slab of Henry of Nassau, a pilgrim knight who died here in 1451. ✉ *Piazza Chigi.*

### Horti Leonini

**GARDEN** | Against the walls of San Quirico d’Orcia, these Italian-style gardens retain merely a shimmer of their past opulence. They were planted in 1581 by Diomede Leoni—hence the name of the park. In the center there’s a 17th-century statue of Cosimo III, the penultimate Medici grand duke of

Tuscany. ✉ *Off Piazza della Libertà.*

## Palazzo Chigi

**BUILDING** | Near the Collegiata stands this splendid town palace, named after the family to whom the Medici bestowed San Quirico in 1667. Small art exhibitions are occasionally displayed in the palace courtyard, and the tourist office is here. The rest of the building is closed to the public. ✉ *Piazza Chigi 2.*

## r Restaurants

### Trattoria al Vecchio Forno

\$\$ | TUSCAN | A meal here in this rustic place is always special; the menu offers Tuscan classics as well as other dishes with a hint of fantasy. Don't miss the dishes accented with porcini mushrooms, such as the excellent mushroom soup. **Known for:** fine wine list; beef fillet with porcini mushrooms; attentive staff. 💰 *Average main: €16* ✉ *Via Piazzola 8* ☎ *0577/897380* 🕒 *Closed Feb.*

## h Hotels

### Palazzo del Capitano

\$\$ | B&B/INN | The guest rooms at this 14th-century palace are named for signs of the zodiac, but the astrological reference stops at the painted symbol on the door. **Pros:** dogs are allowed; elegant furnishings; secluded garden. **Cons:** rooms are on the small side; some street noise; a car is a must. 💰 *Rooms from: €150* ✉ *Via Poliziano 18* ☎ *0577/899028, 0577/899421* 🌐 [www.palazzodelcapitano.com](http://www.palazzodelcapitano.com) 🏠 *22 rooms* 🍳 *Free breakfast.*

## **Bagno Vignoni**

*5 km (3 miles) south of San Quirico d'Orcia, 48 km (29 miles) southeast of Siena, 116 km (70 miles) southeast of Florence.*

Bagno Vignoni has been famous since Roman times for the mildly sulfurous waters that come bubbling up into the large rectangular pool that forms the town's main square, Piazza delle Sorgenti (Square of the Springs). Medieval pilgrims and modern hikers alike have soothed their tired feet in the pleasantly warm water that flows through open channels on its way to the River Orcia. Of particular interest are the ruins of an 18th-century bathhouse on the edge of town and the Chapel of Saint Catherine, who, it seems, came here often.

### **GETTING HERE**

Bagno Vignoni is off the SR2, about an hour from Siena. Tra-In provides bus service from Siena to Bagno Vignoni. There is no train station nearby.

### **VISITOR INFORMATION**

**CONTACTS Bagno Vignoni tourism office.** ✉ *Località Bagno Vignoni 2, San Quirico d'Orcia* ☎ 0577/899711 🌐 [www.comunesanquirico.it](http://www.comunesanquirico.it).

## **S Sights**

### **Piscina Val di Sole**

**POOL** | Bagno Vignoni's public hot-spring pool provides warm-water relaxation for more than just your feet. Stand under the waterfall to massage and soothe weary shoulder muscles. Though the facility remains open, there's no swimming permitted between 1 and 2 from April to September. The last admission is one hour before closing. June–September, on Wednesday and Saturday, the pool is also open from 9 pm to midnight. Entry is more expensive on the weekends. ✉ *Via Ara Urcea 43, San Quirico d'Orcia* ☎ 0577/887112 🎫 €20.

## Vignoni Alto

**TOWN** | A steep gravel road leads north out of Bagno Vignoni for 2 km (1 mile) to the town's upper village, a tiny grouping of buildings huddled at the base of a 13th-century tower. The tower, now a private home, was built to watch over the Via Francigena. A spectacular view of the entire Val d'Orcia opens up from the eastern gate. ✉ *San Quirico d'Orcia*.

## 🍴 Restaurants

### Bottega di Cacio

\$ | **TUSCAN** | Lots of shaded outdoor seating makes this a pleasant place for lunch on a warm day. Pecorino cheese, spicy salami, and grilled vegetables *sott'olio* (preserved in olive oil) are served cafeteria-style. **Known for:** great food at great prices; artisanal local products; fine wine list. 💰 *Average main: €10* ✉ *Piazza del Moretto 31, San Quirico d'Orcia* 📞 *0577/887477* 🌐 *labottegadiacacio.com* 🚫 *No credit cards* 🕒 *Closed Thurs.*

## Eating Well in Southern Tuscany 🍴

The restaurant scene in this part of Tuscany has a split personality. Several towns that are popular vacation destinations for Italians—notably Monte Argentino, Saturnia, and the villages sprinkled across the island of Elba—have excellent upscale restaurants that serve elaborate dishes.

It's not in high-end places, though, that you can experience the diverse flavors of the cooking of this region. Instead, look for the family-run trattorias that can be found in every town. In classic Italian style, the service and setting are often basic, but the food can be great.

Few places serve lighter fare at midday, so be prepared to face heavy meals at lunch and dinner, especially in out-of-the-way towns. Hours for meals are fairly standard: lunch between 12:30 and 2, dinner between 7:30 and 10.

# Montalcino

*19 km (12 miles) northeast of Bagno Vignoni, 41 km (25½ miles) south of Siena, 109 km (68 miles) south of Florence.*

Tiny Montalcino, with its commanding view from high on a hill, can claim an Etruscan past. It saw a fair number of travelers, as it was directly on the road from Siena to Rome. During the early Middle Ages it enjoyed a brief period of autonomy before falling under the orbit of Siena in 1201. Now Montalcino's greatest claim to fame is that it produces Brunello di Montalcino, one of Italy's most esteemed reds. Driving to the town, you pass through the Brunello vineyards. You can sample the excellent but expensive red in wine cellars in town or visit a nearby winery, such as Fattoria dei Barbi, for a guided tour and tasting; you must call ahead for reservations.

## GETTING HERE

By car, follow the SR2 south from Siena, then follow the SP45 to Montalcino. Several Tra-In buses travel between Siena and Montalcino daily, making a tightly scheduled day trip possible. There is no train service available.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS Montalcino Tourism Office.** ✉ *Costa del Municipio 1* 📞 0577/849331 🌐 [www.prolocomontalcino.com](http://www.prolocomontalcino.com).

## S Sights

### Enoteca Osticcio

**WINERY/DISTILLERY** | There are more than one thousand labels in stock. With one of the best views in Montalcino, it is also a very pleasant place to sit and meditate over a glass of Brunello. ✉ *Via Matteotti 23* 📞 0577/848271 🌐 [www.osticcio.it](http://www.osticcio.it).

### Fattoria dei Barbi

**WINERY/DISTILLERY** | The cellars of this venerable winery date from the 17th century and hold almost 200 oak wine barrels. Some of Italy's most famous wines are produced here, including an excellent range of Brunellos, a fine Rosso di Montalcino, and the estate's special Super Tuscan brands: Brusco dei Barbi and Bruscone dei Barbi. Olive oil, salami, and pecorino cheese are made at the winery's organic farm. Guided tours of the cellars are followed by wine tastings, during which you can also sample the other products. ✉ *Località Podernovi 1* ☎ 0577/841111 🌐 [www.fattoriadeibarbi.it](http://www.fattoriadeibarbi.it) 🏠 €5.

### La Fortezza

**CASTLE/PALACE** | Providing refuge for the last remnants of the Sienese army during the Florentine conquest of 1555, the battlements of this 14th-century fortress are still in excellent condition. Climb up the narrow, spiral steps for the 360-degree view of most of southern Tuscany. An enoteca for tasting wines is on-site. ✉ *Piazzale Fortezza* ☎ 0577/849331 🏠 *Fortress free, walls €4* 🕒 *Closed Mon. Nov.–Mar.*

### Museo Civico e Diocesano d'Arte Sacra

**MUSEUM** | This fine museum is housed in a building that once belonged to 13th-century Augustinian friars. The ticket booth is in the glorious refurbished cloister, and the sacred art collection, gathered from churches throughout the region, is displayed on two floors in former monastic quarters. Although the art here might be called B-list, a fine altarpiece by Bartolo di Fredi (circa 1330–1410), the *Coronation of the Virgin*, makes dazzling use of gold. In addition, there's a striking 12th-century crucifix that originally adorned the high altar of the church of Sant'Antimo. Also on hand are many wood sculptures, a typical medium in these parts during the Renaissance. ✉ *Via Ricasoli 31* ☎ 0577/849331 🌐 [www.museisenesi.org](http://www.museisenesi.org) 🏠 €5 🕒 *Closed Mon.*

## r Restaurants

### Il Grappolo Blu

**\$ | ITALIAN** | Any one of this restaurant's *piatti tipici* (typical plates) is worth trying: the local specialty, *pici all'aglione* (thick, long noodles served with



sautéed cherry tomatoes and many cloves of garlic), is done particularly well. The chef also has a deft touch with vegetables; if there's fennel on the menu, make sure to try it. **Known for:** great quality and price; kind, caring staff; convivial atmosphere. [💰] *Average main: €14* [✉] *Scale di Via Moglio 1* [📞] 0577/847150 [🌐] [www.grappoloblu.it](http://www.grappoloblu.it).

### Taverna dei Barbi

[💰] | TUSCAN | Set among the vineyards that produce excellent Brunello—as well as its younger cousin, Rosso di Montalcino—is this rustic taverna with a large stone fireplace. The estate farm produces many of the ingredients used in such traditional specialties as *stracotto nel brunello* (braised beef cooked with beans in Brunello wine). **Known for:** heavenly aromas coming from grilled meat on a spit; fantastic wines; the superb staff. [💰] *Average main: €13* [✉] *Podere Podernuovo 170* [📞] 0577/847117 [🌐] [www.fattoriadeibarbi.it](http://www.fattoriadeibarbi.it).

## h Hotels

### ★ Castiglion del Bosco

\$\$\$\$ | RESORT | This estate, one of the largest still in private hands in Tuscany, was purchased at the beginning of this century and meticulously converted into a second-to-none resort that incorporates a medieval *borgo* (village) and surrounding farmhouses. **Pros:** extremely secluded, in exclusive and tranquil location; includes suites and multibedroom villas; breathtaking scenery. **Cons:** well off the beaten track, the nearest town is 12 km (7½ miles) away; private transportation required; exorbitant prices. [💰] *Rooms from: €1271* [✉] *Località Castiglion del Bosco* [📞] 0577/1913111 [🌐] [www.castigliondelbosco.com](http://www.castigliondelbosco.com) [🏠] 33 rooms [🍴] Free breakfast.

### La Crociana

[💰] | B&B/INN | A quiet and serene family-owned farm in the middle of a small vineyard with glorious views houses guests in lovely apartments that can sleep up to five people. **Pros:** peaceful location; great for families or small groups; friendly atmosphere. **Cons:** no a/c; need a car to get around; family-friendly might not be to everyone's taste. [💰] *Rooms from: €95* [✉] *Località La Croce 15* [📞] 0577/848007 [🌐] [www.lacrociana.com](http://www.lacrociana.com) [🏠] 7 apartments [🍴] No

*meals.*

# Abbazia di Sant'Antimo

10 km (6 miles) south of Montalcino, 51 km (32 miles) south of Siena, 119 km (74 miles) south of Florence.

## GETTING HERE

Abbazia di Sant'Antimo is a 15-minute drive from Montalcino. Tra-In bus service is extremely limited. The abbey cannot be reached by train.

## S Sights

### ★ **Abbazia di Sant'Antimo**

**BUILDING** | It's well worth your while to go out of your way to visit this 12th-century Romanesque abbey, as it's a gem of pale stone in the silvery green of an olive grove. The exterior and interior sculpture is outstanding, particularly the nave capitals, a combination of French, Lombard, and even Spanish influences. The sacristy (seldom open) forms part of the primitive Carolingian church (founded in AD 781), its entrance flanked by 9th-century pilasters. The small vaulted crypt dates from the same period. Above the nave runs a *matroneum* (women's gallery), an unusual feature once used to separate the congregation. Equally unusual is the ambulatory, for which the three radiating chapels were almost certainly copied from a French model. Stay to hear the canonical hours celebrated in Gregorian chant. On the road that leads up toward Castelnuovo dell'Abate is a small shop that sells souvenirs and has washrooms. A 2½-hour hiking trail (signed as #2) leads to the abbey from Montalcino. Starting near Montalcino's small cemetery, the trail heads south through woods, along a ridge road to the tiny hamlet of Villa a Tolli, and then downhill to Sant'Antimo. ✉ *Castelnuovo dell'Abate* ☎ 0577/286300 🌐 [www.antimo.it](http://www.antimo.it).

## Buonconvento

27 km (17 miles) southeast of Siena, 80 km (50 miles) south of Florence.

Buonconvento dates back to the 12th century, though it was surrounded by defensive walls in the later Middle Ages. Though the name means “happy place” in Latin, it was here that Holy Roman Emperor Henry VII died in 1313, cutting short his ill-fated attempt to establish imperial rule in Italy.

### GETTING HERE

By car, Buonconvento is a 30-minute drive south from Siena on the SR2. Tra-In buses travel daily between Siena and Buonconvento several times a day, making a carefully scheduled day trip quite possible. A train connects Siena with Buonconvento, Monte Amiato Scalo, Asciano, and Arbia.

### VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS** **Buonconvento tourism office.** ✉ *Santa Maria della Scala, Piazza del Duomo 1, Siena* ☎ 0577/280551 🌐 [www.terresiena.it](http://www.terresiena.it)

## S Sights

### ★ Antiquarium Poggio Civitate

**MUSEUM** | An imposing bishop’s palace holds this unique museum of Etruscan objects. Although there are many beautiful pieces displayed in an intelligent and well-documented fashion, the almost complete roof and pediment from a 5th-century BC Etruscan house stand out as rare and precious. The so-called Cowboy of Murlo, a large-hatted figure from the same roof, is the star of the collection but anyone interested in ancient Etruscan culture will be well rewarded by a visit here. The museum is named after the nearby site from which most of the artifacts were excavated. ✉ *Piazza della Cattedrale 4, Murlo* ☎ 0577/814099 🌐 [www.museisenesi.org](http://www.museisenesi.org) 📧 €5 🕒 Closed Mon.–Thurs. Oct. 15–Mar. 14.

### ★ Museo d’Arte Sacra

**MUSEUM** | Today quiet Buonconvento is worth a stop for a look at its tiny museum, a two-room picture gallery with more than its fair share of works by Tuscan artists such as Duccio and Andrea di Bartolo. A triptych with the *Madonna and Saints Bernardino and Catherine* by Sano di Pietro stands out amongst other gems by Sienese painters of the 14th and 15th centuries, and Donatello tops a list of the Renaissance sculptors also represented. ☒ *Via Soccini 18* 📞 0577/807181 🌐 [www.museisenesi.org](http://www.museisenesi.org) 📧 €5 🕒 *Closed Mon. Apr.–Oct. Closed weekdays Nov.–Mar.*

## **Murlo**

**TOWN** | If you're heading northwest to Siena, stray 9 km (5½ miles) west of the Via Cassia to Vescovado and then follow the signs 2 km (1 mile) south to this tiny fortified medieval *borgo* (village) that has been completely restored. ☒ *Buonconvento.*

# Abbazia di Monte Oliveto Maggiore

9 km (5½ miles) northeast of Buonconvento, 37 km (23 miles) southeast of Siena.

## GETTING HERE

From Siena, the abbey is a 45-minute drive on the SR2 south to Buonconvento and then the SP451 to Monte Oliveto. Bus and train service are not available.

## S Sights

### ★ **Abbazia di Monte Oliveto Maggiore**

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | Tuscany's most-visited abbey sits in an oasis of olive and cypress trees amid the harsh landscape of Le Crete. It was founded in 1313 by Giovanni Tolomei, a rich Sienese lawyer who, after miraculously regaining his sight, changed his name to Bernardo in homage to St. Bernard of Clairvaux. Bernardo then founded a monastic order dedicated to the restoration of Benedictine principles. The name of the order—the White Benedictines—refers to a vision that Bernardo had in which Christ, Mary, and his own mother were all clad in white. The monks are also referred to as Olivetans (the name of the hill where the monastery was built). In the abbey's main cloister, frescoes by Luca Signorelli and Sodoma depict scenes from the life of St. Benedict. Signorelli began the cycle by painting scenes from the saint's adult life as narrated by St. Gregory the Great; though these nine scenes are badly worn, the individual expressions pack some punch. Later Sodoma completed scenes from the saint's youth and the last years of his life. Note the detailed landscapes, the rich costumes, and the animals (similar to those Sodoma was known to keep as pets). ✉ *Località Monteoliveto Maggiore 1, Chiusure, Asciano* ☎ 0577/707611 🌐 [www.monteolivetomaggiore.it](http://www.monteolivetomaggiore.it) 📬 *By donation.*

## r Restaurants

### La Torre

\$ | TUSCAN | You can enjoy straightforward Tuscan fare in the massive tower at the abbey's entrance, or, when it's warm, on a flower-filled terrace. The *pici ai funghi* (extra-thick handmade spaghetti with mushroom sauce) or *zuppa di funghi* (mushroom soup) take the sting out of a crisp winter day, and the grilled meats are a good bet at any time of year. **Known for:** flavorful home cooking; *pici all'aglione* (a local specialty); simple food in historic setting. [D] *Average main: €12* ✉ *Località Monteoliveto Maggiore 2, 8 km (5 miles) south of Asciano on SS451, Asciano* ☎ 0577/707022 🕒 Closed Tues.

## h Hotels

### Fattoria del Colle

\$ | B&B/INN | Amid rolling vineyards and olive trees, this *fattoria* (farmhouse) produces fine wine and olive oil. **Pros:** great for families; beautiful location; dogs allowed. **Cons:** no a/c; no phones in rooms; 30-minute walk to nearest town. [D] *Rooms from: €117* ✉ *Località Il Colle, 12 km (7 miles) east of Abbazia di Monte Oliveto Maggiore, Trequanda* ☎ 0577/662108 🌐 [www.cinellicolombini.it](http://www.cinellicolombini.it) ➡ 2 rooms, 19 apartments, 2 villas 🍷🍷 All-inclusive.

### ★ Locanda dell'Amorosa

\$\$\$ | B&B/INN | What was a self-sufficient hamlet with its own chapel in the 14th century is now a refined inn; some rooms have stunning views, others a private garden or terrace. **Pros:** romantic setting; excellent restaurant; luxurious rooms. **Cons:** standard rooms are small; need a car to get around; books up quickly. [D] *Rooms from: €280* ✉ *Località L'Amorosa 1, 23 km (14 miles) east of Abbazia di Monte Oliveto Maggiore, Sinalunga* ☎ 0577/677211 🌐 [www.amorosa.it](http://www.amorosa.it) 🕒 Closed Jan. and Feb. ➡ 25 rooms 🍷🍷 No meals.

# Asciano

8 km (5 miles) north of *Abbazia di Monte Oliveto Maggiore*, 25 km (16 miles) southeast of *Siena*, 124 km (77 miles) southeast of *Florence*.

Founded by the Etruscans around the 5th century BC, Asciano is now a sleepy little town surrounded by 13th-century walls. The tiny *centro storico* (historic center) is eminently bike-friendly; any serious cyclist should consider a pit stop here.

## GETTING HERE

From *Siena*, driving to Asciano on the SP438 takes about 40 minutes. Tra-In has limited bus service, making the train, with five or six daily departures, a better option.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS Asciano tourism office.** ✉ *Via delle Fonti* ☎ 0577/718811 🌐 [www.terresiena.it](http://www.terresiena.it).

## S Sights



### Farmacia De Munari

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE | The basement of the local pharmacy holds the town's most important Roman artifact, a polychrome Roman mosaic from the 1st to 2nd century AD. To see the mosaic, you must ask for the keys at the tourist information office. ✉ *Corso Matteotti 82* ☎ 0577/718124 🌐 [www.farmaciademunari.it](http://www.farmaciademunari.it) 🆓 *Free*.

### ★ Museo d'Arte Sacra e Archeologico Palazzo Corboli

MUSEUM | Palazzo Corboli, a magnificent palace dating from the 12th century, has been refurbished and houses the Museo d'Arte Sacra e Archeologico. The collection of Etruscan artifacts is worth a visit, though the real highlight is the collection of lesser-known 13th- and 14th-century paintings from the Sienese school. ✉ *Corso Matteotti 122* ☎ 0577/714450 🌐



[www.museisenesi.org](http://www.museisenesi.org)  €5  *Closed Mon. and Tues. Apr.–Oct. Closed weekdays Nov.–Mar.*

## Monte Amiata

*16 km (10 miles) south of Abbazia di Sant'Antimo, 86 km (52 miles) southeast of Siena, 156 km (94 miles) southeast of Florence.*

At 5,702 feet, this benign volcano is one of Tuscany's few ski slopes, but it's no Mont Blanc. Come in warmer months to take advantage of an abundance of hiking trails that cross wide meadows full of wildflowers and slice through groves of evergreens. Panoramic views of all of Tuscany present themselves on the winding road up to the summit. Along the way, you pass through a succession of tiny medieval towns, including Castel del Piano, Arcidosso, Santa Flora, and Piancastagnaio, where you can pick up picnic supplies and sample the chestnuts and game for which the mountain is famous.

### GETTING HERE

Monte Amiata can be reached by car from Siena on the SR2 (Via Cassia). Bus service is extremely limited. There is a train station at Monte Amiata Scalo, but it is at the base of the mountain and not well served by local buses.

### VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS Monte Amiata tourism office.** ✉ *Via Adua 21, Abbadia San Salvatore* ☎ 0577/775811 🌐 [www.terresiena.it](http://www.terresiena.it).

## S Sights

### Abbadia San Salvatore

**TOWN** | This 1,000-year-old village is worth a stop—skip the nondescript new town and head straight to the centro storico to explore winding stone streets with tiny churches around every corner. The abbey for which the town was named was founded in 743; its current appearance reflects an 11th-century renovation, but the original crypt remains intact. The tourist office in town has hiking-trail maps for Monte Amiata. ✉ *Tourist office, Via Adua 21, Abbadia San Salvatore* ☎ 0577/775811 🌐 [www.terresiena.it](http://www.terresiena.it).

## Grosseto

**TOWN** | The largest town in southern Tuscany, Grosseto is the capital of the Maremma. First recorded in the 9th century as a *castellum* (castle) built to defend a bridge and a port on the nearby River Ombrone, the town is now a thriving agricultural center. Badly damaged during World War II, it has been largely rebuilt since the 1950s, but a small centro storico, protected by defensive walls that follow a hexagonal plan, is worth a short visit on your way to the coast. ✉ *Grosseto*.

## Sorano

38 km (23 miles) south of Abbadia San Salvatore on Monte Amiata, 138 km (86 miles) southeast of Siena, 208 km (130 miles) southeast of Florence.

### GETTING HERE

Being in the southern part of Tuscany, Sorano is most easily reached from Rome. From the A1 highway, take the Orvieto exit. There are no practical ways to arrive here by bus or train.




## S Sights

Sorano's history follows the pattern of most settlements in the area: it was an ancient Etruscan citadel, built up in the 15th century and fortified by one of the many warring families of Tuscany (in this case, the Orsini). It's the execution that sets it apart. With its tiny, twisted streets and stone houses connected by wooden stairways and ramps, Sorano looks as if it was carved from the tufa beneath it—and that's because it was. Underneath the town, visible as you approach, is a vast network of *colombari*, Etruscan-era rooms lined with hundreds of niches carved into stone walls, dating from the 1st century BC. The *colombari* aren't yet open to the public, but Sorano is worth a visit regardless, if only to walk its medieval alleyways and to watch old-style artisans at work. Views of the densely forested hills around town will have you reaching for your camera.

## h Hotels

### Hotel Della Fortezza

\$ | B&B/INN | High above Sorano, this austere-looking 11th-century Orsini castle boasts spectacular views of the town and surrounding countryside.

**Pros:** rooms have great views of Sorano; romantic location. **Cons:** very basic decor; no a/c in rooms.  Rooms from: €100  Piazza Cairolì 5 

0564/632010  [www.hoteldellafortezza.com](http://www.hoteldellafortezza.com)  14 rooms, 1 suite  Free breakfast.

## In Search of Etruscan Artifacts S

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To fully appreciate the strangely quixotic relationship that the ancient Etruscan culture had with the tufa rock that provided the fabric of the civilization, you must visit southern Tuscany. The houses and tombs, and sometimes even the roads, were carved from this soft volcanic stone, making it impossible to think about the Etruscans without also imagining the dark sandy tufa that surrounded them.

Some of the best-preserved, and most mysterious, of all their monumental tombs are in the area of Pitigliano, Sorano, and Sovana. In the necropolis of the latter, you can actually walk on a section of Etruscan road that is almost 2,500 years old.

Chiusi should not be missed if you are interested in things Etruscan: several tombs that still retain their brightly colored decorations and a particularly fine and thoughtfully organized archaeological museum await you there.

# Pitigliano

*10 km (6 miles) south of Sorano, 147 km (92 miles) southeast of Siena, 217 km (136 miles) southeast of Florence.*

From a distance, the medieval stone houses of Pitigliano look as if they melt into the cliffs upon which they are perched. Etruscan tombs, which locals use to store wine, are connected by a network of caves and tunnels. At the beginning of the 14th century the Orsini family moved its base from Sovana to the better-fortified Pitigliano. They built up the town's defenses and fortified their home, Palazzo Orsini. Later, starting in 1543, Antonio da Sangallo the Younger added to the town's fortress, building bastions and towers throughout the town and adding the aqueduct as well.

Pitigliano has become a trendy locale for Italian vacation rentals, making the town center lively in summer. Restaurants serve up good meals that, as a result of the tourist boom, have inflated prices. Bianco di Pitigliano (Pitigliano white wine) is a fresh and light, dry wine produced from the vines that thrive in the tufa soil of the area.

## GETTING HERE

Pitigliano is best reached by car along the SR74 from either the Via Aurelia to the west or the A1 highway to the east. Plan on a journey of about an hour. Pitigliano cannot be reached directly by train, but bus service is available from the train station in Grosseto.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS** **Pitigliano tourism office.** ✉ *Piazza Garibaldi 37* 📞  
0564/616322 🌐 [www.comune.pitigliano.gr.it](http://www.comune.pitigliano.gr.it)

## S Sights

### Duomo

RELIGIOUS SITE | This 18th-century Baroque cathedral has a single nave with

chapels and paintings on the sides. There are two altarpieces by local artist Francesco Zuccarelli (1702–88), a Rococo landscape artist, a favorite of George III, and one of the founders of the British Royal Academy. ✉ *Piazza S. Gregorio 1.*



## Museo di Arte Sacra

**CASTLE/PALACE** | The museum, housed in the Palazzo Orsini, has several rooms featuring paintings by Zuccarelli, who was born in Pitigliano in 1702. Other works include a Madonna carved in wood by Jacopo della Quercia (1371/74–1438), a 14th-century crucifix, period furniture, and a numismatic collection. ✉ *Piazza Fortezza Orsini 4* ☎ 347/7289656 🌐 [www.palazzo-orsini-pitigliano.it](http://www.palazzo-orsini-pitigliano.it) 🏠 €5.

## Piccola Gerusalemme di Pitigliano

**HISTORIC SITE** | Now a museum of Jewish culture, the ghetto where Jews took refuge from 16th-century Catholic persecution was a thriving community until the beginning of World War II. Inside the precinct today are the remains of ritual bathing basins, a wine cellar, a kosher butcher shop and bakery, and the restored synagogue, where religious services are held on the Sabbath. ✉

Vicolo Marghera ☎ 0564/614230 🌐 [www.lapiccolagerusalemme.it](http://www.lapiccolagerusalemme.it) 📧 €5.

## r Restaurants

### Il Tufo Allegro

\$\$ | TUSCAN | The name means Happy Tufa; you would be happy, too, if you ate at this fine restaurant cut directly into the tufa rock plateau upon which old Pitigliano sits. The cuisine is local and regional: *pappardelle al ragù di cinghiale* (pappardelle pasta with wild boar sauce) is particularly tasty, and fish also figures on the menu from time to time. **Known for:** fixed-price menus available; local and regional cuisine; stunning setting. 💰 *Average main: €15* ✉ *Vicolo della Costituzione 5* ☎ 0564/616192 🕒 *Closed Tues. and mid-Jan.–mid-Feb. No lunch Wed. Oct.–July.*

## h Hotels

### Locanda Il Tufo Rosa

\$ | B&B/INN | The space for part of this tiny guesthouse has been carved out of the tufa rock beneath the aqueduct at the entrance to the old town. **Pros:** excellent location; best value in town; kind and caring proprietors. **Cons:** rooms are small; getting here is difficult, narrow stairways to climb; some complain of traffic noise. 💰 *Rooms from: €75* ✉ *Piazza Petruccioli 97* ☎ 0564/617019 🌐 [www.iltuforosa.com](http://www.iltuforosa.com) 🏠 7 rooms 🚫 No meals.



# Sovana

*5 km (3 miles) north of Pitigliano, 155 km (97 miles) southeast of Siena, 225 km (141 miles) southeast of Florence.*

This town of Etruscan origin was once the capital of the area in southern Tuscany dominated by the Aldobrandeschi family, whose reign was at its height in the 11th and first half of the 12th centuries. One member of the family, Hildebrand, was the 11th-century Catholic reformer Pope Gregory VII (circa 1020–85). The 13th- to 14th-century Romanesque fortress known as the Rocca Aldobrandesca is now in ruins. Via di Mezzo, with stones arranged in a fish-scale pattern, is the main street running the length of the town.

## GETTING HERE

Like Sorano and Pitigliano, Sovana is best reached by car along the SR74, either from the Via Aurelia to the west or the A1 highway to the east. Sovana cannot be reached by train or easily by bus.

## S Sights

### Duomo

**BUILDING** | Sovana extends from the Rocca Aldobrandesca at the eastern end of town to the imposing cathedral, built between the 10th and 14th century, in the west. The church, dedicated to Saints Peter and Paul, is Romanesque in style but, atypically, the main entrance is on the left-hand side of the building. ✉ *Piazza del Duomo.*

### Etruscan necropolis

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE** | Some of Italy's best-preserved monumental rock tombs, dating from the 2nd to the 3rd century BC, are found just outside the town at the Etruscan necropolis. Some of the tombs, such as the so-called Tomba Sirena (Siren's Tomb), preserve clear signs of their original and elaborately carved decorations. Others, like the Tomba Ildebranda

(Hildebrand Tomb), are spectacular evidence of the architectural complexity sometimes achieved. Don't forget to walk along the section of an Etruscan road carved directly into the tufa stone. ☒ *1½ km (1 mile) west of town center*  
☎ 0564/488573 ☒ €5.

### **Piazza del Pretorio**

**CASTLE/PALACE** | Here, in the central town square, you'll find the 13th-century Palazzo Pretorio, which has a facade adorned with crests of Sovana's captains of justice; and the Renaissance Palazzo Bourbon dal Monte. ☒ *Sovana.*

### **Santa Maria Maggiore**

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | This little 14th-century church on the main square has frescoes from the late-15th-century Sienese Umbrian school and a ciborium dating back to the 8th century. ☒ *Piazza del Pretorio.*

## **Saturnia**

*25 km (15 miles) east of Sovana, 129 km (77 miles) south of Siena, 199 km (119 miles) south of Florence.*

Saturnia was settled even before the Etruscan period, but nowadays it's best known not for what lies buried beneath the ground but for what comes up from it: hot, sulfurous water that supplies the town's world-famous spa. According to an oft-repeated legend, the thermal waters were created when Saturn, restless with earth's bickering mortals, threw down a thunderbolt and created a hot spring whose miraculously calming waters created peace among them. Today these magnesium-rich waters bubble forth from the clay, drawing Italians and non-Italians alike seeking relief for skin and muscular ailments as well as a bit (well, a lot) of relaxation. Unlike better-known spa centers such as Montecatini Terme, nature still has her place here.

### **GETTING HERE**

Saturnia is a 30-minute drive from Pitigliano. Follow the SS74 to Manciano, then the SS322 to Montemerano, and then turn right onto the Strada Saturnia–La Croce. The RAMA bus company travels from Grosseto to Saturnia, but three changes make the journey particularly arduous. There is no train service to Saturnia.

## **S Sights**

### **Cascate del Gorello** (*Gorello Falls*)

**HOT SPRINGS** | Outside Saturnia, the hot, sulfurous waters cascade over natural limestone shelves at the Cascate del Gorello, affording bathers a sweeping view of the open countryside. The falls are on public land and can be enjoyed 24 hours a day. They get extremely crowded—day and night—during August. ✉ 2 km (1 mile) south of Saturnia, on road to Montemerano  
🆓 *Free.*

### **Necropoli del Puntone**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE** | Pre-Etruscan tombs at this necropolis aren't kept up well, but they're interesting simply for their age, as they're even older than Saturnia's legendary baths. Access is free and at all hours. ☒ 1 km (½ mile) north of Saturnia, on road to Poggio Murello, turn left and follow signs.

## Terme, Wrath of the Gods S

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In a country known for millennia as a hotbed of seismic activity, Tuscany seems to have gotten a lucky break. Although Campania and Sicily are famous for active volcanoes, and Umbria and the Marches stand on notoriously shaky ground, Tuscany's underground activity makes itself known in the form of steamy and sulfurous hot springs that have earned the region a name as a spa-goer's paradise.

Tuscany is dotted throughout with small *terme* (thermal baths), where hot waters flow from natural springs deep under the earth's surface. Since the time of the Etruscans, these hot springs have been valued for their curative properties. The Romans attributed the springs' origins to divine thunderbolts that split the earth open and let flow the miraculous waters. Regardless of their origin, their appeal endures, as the presence of thousands of people taking the waters in the Maremma attests.

Each of the springs has different curative properties, attributable to the various concentrations of minerals and gases that individual water flows pick up on their way to the surface. Carbon dioxide, for example, is said to strengthen the immune system, and sulfur, its characteristic rotten-egg smell notwithstanding, is said to relieve pain and aid in relaxation.

Although customs and conventions vary between spas, you generally pay an admission fee to swim in baths that range from hot natural lakes and waterfalls (with accompanying mud) to giant limestone swimming pools filled with cloudy, bright blue, steaming water. Larger establishments have treatments that can range from mineral mud baths to steam inhalations.

Believers swear that Tuscany's hot springs have a positive effect on everything from skin disorders to back pain to liver function to stress. Whatever your opinion, a good soak in a Tuscan spring is a relaxing way to take a break, and as far as geological phenomena go, it beats an earthquake or a volcanic eruption any day.

A few of the region's spas, notably the world-famous Montecatini Terme (⇒ See Chapter 4), are

well known outside Tuscany. For the most part, however, the local establishments that run the springs are not well publicized, which can mean a more local flavor, lower prices, and fewer crowds: Terme di Bagni di Lucca is near Lucca; Terme di Chianciano is near Chiusi; Bagno Vignoni is just south of San Quirico d'Orcia; and Terme di Saturnia is not too far from Grosseto.

## Terme di Saturnia

**POOL** | The swimming pools and treatments at Terme di Saturnia spa and resort are open to the public. You might make an appointment for a thermal mud therapy or rent a lounge chair and umbrella to sit by the pools. On weekends, the day price jumps a wee bit. ✉ 3 km (2 miles) east of Saturnia on road to Montemerano, after Gorello Falls ☎ 0564/600111 🌐 [www.termedisaturnia.it](http://www.termedisaturnia.it) 📄 From €21.

## r Restaurants

### ★ Da Caino

\$\$\$\$ | TUSCAN | At this excellent restaurant in the nearby town of Montemerano, specialties include roast veal tongue with blueberry-flavored onions, saffron, and capers, *tortelli di cinta senese in brodetto di castagne e gallina* (pasta filled with Sienese pork in a chicken and chestnut broth), and such hearty dishes as *cinghiale lardolato con finocchi, arance e olive* (larded wild boar with fennel, orange, and olives). Prices are among the highest in the region; locals consider it a serious splurge. **Known for:** serious splurge; innovative cuisine. 💰 Average main: €50 ✉ Via della Chiesa 4, 7 km (4½ miles) south of Saturnia on road to Scansano, Montemerano ☎ 0564/602817 🌐 [www.dacaino.it](http://www.dacaino.it) 🕒 Closed Wed., Jan., and 2 wks in July. No lunch Thurs.

### I Due Cippi

\$\$\$ | TUSCAN | Alessandro Aniello and his brother Lorenzo carry on with the captivating food created by their late father. Local ingredients are emphasized, and the dishes are turned to perfection. **Known for:** food with fantasy; duck and wild boar dishes; marvelous pastas. 💰 Average main: €25 ✉ Piazza Vittorio Veneto 26 ☎ 0564/601074 🌐 [www.iduecippi.com](http://www.iduecippi.com) 🕒 Closed Dec. 20–26, Jan. 10–25, and Tues. Oct.–June.

# h Hotels

## Terme di Saturnia

\$\$\$\$ | RESORT | Spa living might not get any more top-notch than this: roam the spa resort in a plush white bathrobe (waiting in your room) before dipping into the 37.5°C (100°F) sulfurous thermal pools. **Pros:** luxurious setting; excellent service; wide range of treatments. **Cons:** on the pricey side; aseptic atmosphere; gets rather crowded on holidays. [📍] Rooms from: €450 [✉] 3 km (2 miles) east of Saturnia on road to Montemerano, past Gorello Falls [📞] 0564/600111 [🌐] [www.termedisaturnia.it](http://www.termedisaturnia.it) [🏠] 126 rooms [🍳] Free breakfast.

## Villa Acquaviva

\$\$ | B&B/INN | An elegant villa painted antique rose appears at the end of a tree-lined driveway perched on top of a hill off the main road half a mile before Montemerano. **Pros:** near the hot springs; lovely views; some pets welcome. **Cons:** attendants can be hard to find during the day; need a car to get around. [📍] Rooms from: €130 [✉] Strada Scansanese 4 miles south of Saturnia, Montemerano [📞] 0564/602890 [🌐] [www.relaisvillaacquaviva.com](http://www.relaisvillaacquaviva.com) [🏠] 25 rooms [🍳] Free breakfast.

# Parco Naturale della Maremma

10 km (6 miles) south of Grosseto, 88 km (55 miles) southwest of Siena, 156 km (97 miles) south of Florence.

## GETTING HERE

The park is best reached by car from the Via Aurelia (SS1), which runs between Rome and Pisa. Local bus service connects the park with the train station in nearby Grosseto.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS Parco Naturale della Maremma tourism office.** ✉ *Via del Bersagliere 7/9, Alberese* ☎ 0564/393238 🌐 [www.parco-maremma.it](http://www.parco-maremma.it).

## S Sights

### Parco Naturale della Maremma

**BEACH—SIGHT** | The well-kept nature preserve at **Monti dell'Uccellina** is an oasis of green hills sloping down to small, secluded beaches on protected coastline. Wild goats and rabbits, foxes and wild boars, as well as horses and a domesticated long-horned white ox unique to this region, make their home among miles of sea pines, rosemary plants, and juniper bushes. The park also has scattered Etruscan and Roman ruins and a medieval abbey, the **Abbazia di San Rabano**. Enter from the south at Talamone (turn right 1 km [½ mile] before town) or from Alberese, both reachable from the SS1 (Via Aurelia). Daily limits restrict the number of cars that can enter, so in summer it's best to either reserve ahead or to leave your car in Alberese and use the regular bus service; contact the park's information office for bookings, and to secure English-language guides. ✉ *Park Office, Via Bersagliere 7/9, Alberese* ☎ 0564/393238 🌐 [www.parco-maremma.it](http://www.parco-maremma.it) 🆓 *Free*.

# Monte Argentario

*Porto Santo Stefano 60 km (37 miles) southwest of Saturnia, 118 km (74 miles) southwest of Siena, 186 km (116 miles) southwest of Florence.*

Connected to the mainland only by two thin strips of land and a causeway, Monte Argentario feels like an island. The north and south isthmuses, La Giannella and La Feniglia, have long sandy beaches popular with families, but otherwise the terrain is rugged, dotted with luxurious vacation houses. There are beautiful views from the panoramic mountain road encircling the promontory, and a drive here is a romantic sunset excursion. The mountain itself rises 2,096 feet above the sea, and it's ringed with rocky beaches and sheer cliffs that afford breathtaking views of the coast.

## GETTING HERE

The Monte Argentario peninsula lies just off the SS1 (Via Aurelia), which connects Rome and Pisa. It's a two-hour drive from either city. Intercity buses are not a viable option. The closest train station is in Orbetello Scalo, with local bus service available to both Porto Ercole and Porto Santo Stefano.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS** **Monte Argentario tourism office.** ✉ *Piazza delle Valle, Porto Santo Stefano* ☎ 0564/814208 🌐 [www.monteargentario.info](http://www.monteargentario.info).

## S Sights

### Porto Ercole

**TOWN** | On the southeastern side of Monte Argentario, this small port town is the haunt of the rich and famous, with top-notch hotels and restaurants perched on the cliffs. ✉ *Monte Argentario.*

### Porto Santo Stefano

**TOWN** | On the north side, busy and colorful Porto Santo Stefano is Monte Argentario's main center, with markets, hotels, restaurants, and ferry service



to Giglio and Giannutri, two of the Tuscan islands. ✉ *Monte Argentario*.

## h Hotels

### Hotel Don Pedro

\$ | B&B/INN | The private beach more than makes up for the lack of a pool at this hotel in Porto Ercole. **Pros:** panoramic views of port; private beach; family-friendly atmosphere. **Cons:** not all rooms have sea views; uninspired decor; family-friendly atmosphere could be uninspiring to some. [💰] *Rooms from: €100* ✉ *Via Panoramica 7, Porto Ercole* ☎ *0564/833914* 🌐 [www.hoteldonpedro.it](http://www.hoteldonpedro.it) 🕒 *Closed Nov.–Easter* ↔ *60 rooms* 🍴🚫 *No meals*.

### Il Pellicano

\$\$\$\$ | RESORT | Worldly cares are softly washed away by the comforts of the rooms (some damask linens, tapestry-like canopies, marble highboys), the superlative attentiveness of the staff, and the hotel's magnificent garden setting. **Pros:** spectacular setting and gardens; superlative service; excellent dining options. **Cons:** isolated location; on a long dirt road; beach is rocky. [💰] *Rooms from: €947* ✉ *Località Lo Sbarcatello, 5 km (3 miles) west of Porto Ercole* ☎ *0564/858111* 🌐 [www.pellicanohotels.com](http://www.pellicanohotels.com) 🕒 *Closed Nov.–Mar.* ↔ *50 rooms* 🍴🚫 *Free breakfast*.

# Massa Marittima

111 km (69 miles) southeast of Livorno, 48 km (30 miles) east of Piombino, 66 km (42 miles) southwest of Siena, 132 km (82 miles) southwest of Florence.

Massa Marittima is a charming medieval hill town with a rich mining and industrial heritage—pyrite, iron, and copper were found in these parts. After a centuries-long slump (most of the minerals having been depleted), the town is now popular simply for its old streets.

## GETTING HERE

From Siena, the easiest way to reach Massa Marittima is to take the SP73bis, then the SP441. Bus service from Siena, provided by Tra-In, is not timed to make day trips feasible. Massa Marittima cannot be reached by train.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS** **Massa Marittima tourism office.** ✉ *Via Todini 3* ☎ 0566/902756 🌐 [www.massamarittima.info](http://www.massamarittima.info).

## S Sights

### Antico Frantoio

**HISTORIC SITE** | On a small street, inside the walls of the **Fortezza dei Senesi**, you'll find this ancient olive press. Mules harnessed to the heavy stone wheel pulled it around, and as it rolled, the olives on the flat surface were crushed by its weight, extracting the precious oil—the same technique is used today (minus the mules). ✉ *Via Populonia 12* ☎ 0566/902289 🌐 [www.museionline.info](http://www.museionline.info) 📄 €2 🕒 Closed Nov.–Mar. except by reservation.

### Duomo

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | The central Piazza Garibaldi, dating from the 13th to the early 14th century, contains this Romanesque cathedral, with sculptures of the life of patron saint Cerbone above the door. ✉ *Via della Libertà 1.*

## Museo Archeologico

**CASTLE/PALACE** | The 13th-century Palazzo Pretorio, on Piazza Garibaldi, is home to this fascinating museum with plenty of Etruscan artifacts. A number of displays reconstruct the nature of daily life for the Etruscans who once inhabited the hills in this area. ✉ *Piazza Garibaldi 1* ☎ 0566/902289 🌐 [www.museidimaremma.it](http://www.museidimaremma.it) 🎫 €3 🕒 Closed Nov.–Mar. Closed Mon.

## Museo Arte e Storia della Miniera (Museum of the Art and History of Mining)

**MUSEUM** | This museum, in the upper part of town, shows how dependent Massa Marittima has been since Etruscan times on the mining of copper, lead, and silver. Exhibits trace the history of the local mining industry. ✉ *Palazzetto delle Armi, Piazza Matteotti* ☎ 0566/902289 🌐 [www.museidimaremma.it](http://www.museidimaremma.it) 🎫 Museum €5 🕒 Closed weekday mornings.

## Museo di Arte Sacra

**MUSEUM** | In the converted convent church of San Pietro all'Orto, this museum houses a large number of medieval paintings and sculptures gathered from churches in and around Massa Marittima. Perhaps the most important piece, Ambrogio Lorenzetti's early-14th-century *Maestà*, was discovered in the storage room of the church in 1866. ✉ *Corso Diaz 36* ☎ 0566/901954 🌐 [www.museiartesacra.net](http://www.museiartesacra.net) 🎫 €5 🕒 Closed Mon.

## Torre del Candeliere (Tower of the Candlemaker)

**MILITARY SITE** | Built to both defend and control their new possession after the Sienese conquered Massa Marittima in 1335, the **Fortezza dei Senesi** crowns the upper part of town. Just inside the imposing Sienese gate is the so-called Tower of the Candle Holder, a massive bastion that is connected to the outer walls by the **Arco Senese**, a high arched bridge. A visit to the tower gives access to the arch and to the upper city walls, where commanding views open before you. ✉ *Piazza Matteotti* ☎ 0566/902289 🌐 [www.museidimaremma.it](http://www.museidimaremma.it) 🎫 €3.

## h Hotels

## Rifugio Prategiano

\$ | B&B/INN | Horseback trail rides through Tuscany's cowboy country are an integral part of the experience at this family-run country inn. **Pros:** great for families with children; plenty of outdoor sports activities; peaceful setting. **Cons:** very simple furnishings; no a/c in rooms; need a car to get around. \$  
Rooms from: €120 ✉ *Via dei Platani 3b, Località Prategiano 17 km (11 miles) west of Abbazia San Galgano, Montieri* ☎ 0566/997700 🌐  
[www.hotelprategiano.it](http://www.hotelprategiano.it) 🕒 Closed Nov.–mid-Mar. 🛏 24 rooms 🍴 Free breakfast.

## p Performing Arts

### Balestro del Girifalco (*Falcon Crossbow Contest*)

FESTIVALS | On the fourth Sunday of May and again on the second Sunday in August, Massa Marittima's three traditional neighborhood groups dress in medieval costumes and parade through the town with much fanfare and flag throwing. The pinnacle of the event is a shooting competition between the town's districts using arrows and crossbows. ✉ *Massa Marittima* 🌐  
[www.comune.massamarittima.gr.it](http://www.comune.massamarittima.gr.it).

## **Abbazia di San Galgano**

*32 km (20 miles) northeast of Massa Marittima, 33 km (20 miles) southwest of Siena, 87 km (54 miles) south of Florence.*

Time has had its way with this Gothic cathedral without a rooftop, a hauntingly beautiful sight well worth a detour. The church was built in the 13th century by Cistercian monks, who designed it after churches built by their order in France. But starting in the 15th century it fell into ruin, declining gradually over centuries. Grass has grown through the floor, and the roof and windows are gone. What's left of its facade and walls makes a grandiose and desolate picture. In July and August the scene is enlivened by evening concerts arranged by the Accademia Musicale Chigiana in Siena. Contact the tourist information office at the abbey for details.

### **GETTING HERE**

You'll need a car to get here, as bus and train service is not available. From Siena, follow the SP73bis, then take the SP441 south.

## **S Sights**

### **Eremo di Montesiepi**

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | Behind the church of San Galgano, a short climb brings you to this charming little chapel with frescoes by painter Ambrogio Lorenzetti (documented 1319–48), and a sword in a stone. Legend has it that Galgano, a medieval warrior and bon vivant, was struck by a revelation on this spot in which an angel told him to give up his fighting and frivolous ways forever. As a token of his conversion, he plunged his sword into the rock, where it still remains today. ✉ Above Abbazia di San Galgano, Massa Marittima 📞 0577/750313 🌐 [www.prolocochiusdino.it](http://www.prolocochiusdino.it).

# Giglio

60 km (36 miles) south of Massa Marittima, 90 km (55 miles) south of Siena, 145 km (87 miles) south of Florence.

## GETTING HERE

To get to Giglio, take one of the Toremar car ferries that run between Porto Santo Stefano on the Monte Argentario peninsula and Giglio Porto. The trip, which costs €6.30 for passengers and €30 for cars, takes about an hour.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS** **Giglio tourism office.** ✉ *Via Provinciale 9, Giglio Porto* ☎ 0564/809400 🌐 [www.isoladelgiglio.it](http://www.isoladelgiglio.it).

## S Sights

### Isola del Giglio

**ISLAND** | This rocky, romantic isle, whose name translates to Island of the Lily, is an hour by ferry from Porto Santo Stefano but a world away from the mainland's hustle and bustle. The island's three towns—**Giglio Porto**, the charming harbor where the ferry arrives; **Giglio Castello**, a walled village at Giglio's highest point; and **Giglio Campese**, a modern town on the west side of the island—are connected by one long, meandering road. But to really explore Giglio you need a good pair of hiking boots. A network of rugged trails climbs up the steep hills through clusters of wild rosemary and tiny daffodils, and once you leave town, chances are your only company will be the goats who thrive on Giglio's sun-baked hills.

The island's main attraction, however, is at sea level—a sparkling array of lush coves and tiny beaches, most accessible only on foot or by boat. With the exception of Giglio Campese, where the sandy beach is as popular in summer as any mainland resort, most of the little island's coastline is untouched, leaving plenty of room for peaceful sunning for those willing to

go off the beaten path.

## h Hotels

### Hotel Arenella

\$ | B&B/INN | Sitting above the sea, this isolated hotel has a private rocky beach reachable by a steep 60-foot descent. **Pros:** magnificent views; peaceful location; shuttle service to the port. **Cons:** long walk to nearest restaurants; modern decor geared to a business clientele; a car is a necessity.

📄 Rooms from: €90 ✉ Via Arenella 5, Giglio Porto ☎ 0564/809340 🌐 [www.hotelarenella.com](http://www.hotelarenella.com) 🕒 Closed Nov.–Easter 🛏 26 rooms 🍳 Free breakfast.

## Getting Here and Around: The Islands S

Passenger and car ferries link the Tuscan islands with the mainland.

**Chiappi.** Honda and Yamaha scooters as well as campers, cars, and boats can be rented here. ✉ Calata Italia 38, Elba, Portoferraio ☎ 0565/914366 🌐 [www.rentchiappi.it](http://www.rentchiappi.it).

**Moby Lines.** From Piombino, this company provides one-hour ferry service to Portoferraio on Elba. ✉ Via Ninci 1, Portoferraio ☎ 02/76027132, 199/303040 toll-free in Italy 🌐 [www.moby.it](http://www.moby.it).

**Rent Modo.** On Elba there are numerous places to rent bikes, scooters, motorcycles, or cars, and here you can choose from all of the above. ✉ Via Renato Fucini 6, Portoferraio ☎ 338/7185735.

**Toremar.** This ferry service provides transportation between Piombino and Elba's main ports as well as to the smaller islands: from Livorno to Capraia; from Piombino to Pianosa; and from Porto Santo Stefano to Giglio. ✉ Piazzale Premuda 13, Nuova Stazione Marittima, Piombino ☎ 199/117733 toll-free in Italy 🌐 [www.toremar.it](http://www.toremar.it).

Prices can differ drastically, so comparison shop before buying your tickets. Reserve your seat ahead of time in the peak-season months of July and August.

### Pardini's Hermitage

\$\$\$\$ | B&B/INN | This ultraprivate hotel is free from noise except for the lapping of waves on the rocks; terraces and flowering gardens spill down a rocky cliff to private beaches below, and on the hill above, the owners raise purebred donkeys that you can ride over the mountain and goats that produce fresh yogurt and cheese for breakfast. **Pros:** hydromassages and mud baths are available at the hotel's spa; spectacular views; homey accommodations. **Cons:** isolation makes the hotel a poor base from which to tour the island; no a/c. ☎ Rooms from: €360 ✉ Località Cala degli Alberi, Giglio Porto ☎ 0564/809034 🌐 [www.hermit.it](http://www.hermit.it) 🕒 Closed Oct.–Mar. 🏠 12 rooms 🍷 All-inclusive.

## a Activities

### HIKING

For day-trippers, the best hike is the 1,350-foot ascent from Giglio Porto to Giglio Castello. It's a 4-km (2½-mile) trek that takes about an hour and affords marvelous views of the island's east coast. Frequent bus service to and from Castello allows the option of walking just one way. The rest of the island's trails are reasonably well marked. Pick up maps at the tourist office in Giglio Porto.

### WATER SPORTS

#### Boatmen

WATER SPORTS | Rent motorboats (usually with a skipper) for exploring the island's innumerable coves at this kiosk on the waterfront. Look for signs reading *noleggio barche* (boat rentals) near the ferry dock. ✉ On port, Via Umberto I, Giglio Porto ☎ 349/3508493 🌐 [www.boatmen.it](http://www.boatmen.it).



# Elba

*40 km (24 miles) southwest of Massa Marittima, 80 km (48 miles) southwest of Siena, 120 km (72 miles) southwest of Florence.*

Elba is the Tuscan archipelago's largest island, but it resembles nearby verdant Corsica more than it does its rocky Italian sisters, thanks to a network of underground springs that keep it lush and green. It's this combination of semitropical vegetation and dramatic mountain scenery—unusual in the Mediterranean—that has made Elba so prized for so long, and the island's uniqueness continues to draw boatloads of visitors throughout the warm months. A car is very useful for getting around the island, but public buses stop at most towns several times a day; the tourist office has timetables.

## GETTING HERE

Toremar car ferries make the one-hour trip between Portoferraio and Piombino on the mainland. The cost is €14 for passengers, €34 for cars.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

For information about the flora and fauna to be found on Elba, as well as throughout the Tuscan archipelago, contact the Parco Nazionale dell'Arcipelago Toscano. The tourism office also has detailed walking and hiking maps.

**CONTACTS** **Elba tourism office.** ✉ *Viale Elba 4, Portoferraio* ☎ *0565/914671* 🌐 [www.aptelba.it](http://www.aptelba.it).

# S Sights

## Marina di Campo

**BEACH—SIGHT** | On the south side of Elba, this small town with a long sandy beach and protected cove is a classic summer vacationer's spot. The laid-back marina is full of bars, boutiques, and restaurants. ✉ *Marina di Campo.*

## Word of Mouth

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“The beaches on Elba are wonderful and you can swim, snorkel or just relax. We were there in off season, but I expect they get really crowded. The times we went out to eat were wonderful. Simple pizzas and fish and inexpensive wine. What a place!” —applejax

### Monte Capanne

**MOUNTAIN—SIGHT** | The highest point on Elba, Monte Capanna is crossed by a twisting road that provides magnificent vistas at every turn; the tiny towns of **Poggio** and **Marciana** have enchanting little piazzas full of flowers and trees. You can hike to the top of the mountain, or take an unusual open-basket cable car from just above Poggio. ✉ *Marciana*.

### Montecristo

**ISLAND** | The most famous visitor to the island, about 50 km (30 miles) south of Elba, was fictional: Alexandre Dumas’s legendary count. Today the island is a well-protected nature preserve with wild Montecristo goats and vipers, peregrine falcons, and rare Corsican seagulls who make their home amid rosemary bushes and stunted pine trees. Scientific-research teams are given priority for permission to land on the island, and an annual quota of 1,000 visitors strictly limits even their number. ✉ *Isola di Montecristo, Portoferraio*.

### Museo Archeologico

**MUSEUM** | Exhibits at this museum reconstruct the island’s ancient history through a display of Etruscan and Roman artifacts recovered from shipwrecks. ✉ *Località Linguella, Calata Buccari, Portoferraio* 📞 0565/944024 🌐 [www.infoelba.it](http://www.infoelba.it) 📧 €7 🕒 Closed Nov.–Mar.

### Palazzina dei Mulini

**HOUSE** | During Napoléon’s famous exile on Elba in 1814–15, he built this residence out of two windmills. It still contains furniture from the period and Napoléon’s impressive library, with the more than 2,000 volumes that he brought here from France. ✉ *Piazzale Napoleone 1, Portoferraio* 📞 0565/915846 🌐 [www.infoelba.it](http://www.infoelba.it) 📧 From €5 🕒 Closed Tues.

## Porto Azzurro

**TOWN** | The waters of the port at Elba's eastern end are noticeably *azzurro* (sky-blue). It's worth a stop for a walk and gelato along the rows of yachts harbored here. ✉ *Porto Azzurro*.

## Portoferraio

**TOWN** | The lively port town where Victor Hugo (1802–85) spent his boyhood makes a good base for visiting Elba. Head right when you get off the ferry to get to the centro storico, fortified in the 16th century by the Medici grand duke Cosimo I (1519–74). Most of the pretty, multicolor buildings that line the old harbor date from the 18th and 19th centuries when the boats in the port were full of mineral exports rather than tourists. ✉ *Portoferraio*.

## Rio Marina

**TOWN** | Elba's quietest town is an old-fashioned port on the northeastern edge of the island. Here you'll find a pebble beach, an old mine, a leafy public park, and ferry service to Piombino. ✉ *Rio Marina*.

## Villa San Martino

**HOUSE** | A couple of miles outside Portoferraio, this splendid villa was Napoléon's summer home during his 10-month exile on Elba. Temporary exhibitions are held in a gallery attached to the main building. The Egyptian Room, decorated with idealized scenes of the Egyptian campaign, may have provided Napoléon the consolation of glories past. The villa's classical facade was added by a Russian prince, Anatolia Demidoff, after he bought the house in 1852. ✉ *Località San Martino, Portoferraio* ☎ 0565/914688 🌐 [www.infoelba.it](http://www.infoelba.it) 🚗 From €5.

# 1 Restaurants

## Ristorante Pizzeria Il Mare

\$\$ | **ITALIAN** | Homemade pastas and fresh seafood are served here with a dash of style. The chef puts a creative spin on the classics, coming up with such delights as homemade vegetable gnocchi with scampi in a butter and saffron sauce. **Known for:** well-prepared octopus; delicious pizzas; genial service. 💰

Average main: €15 ✉ Via del Pozzo 16, Rio Marina ☎ 0565/962117 🌐  
Closed Nov.–Mar.

### Trattoria da Lido

\$\$ | SEAFOOD | Opened in 1970, this restaurant serves commendable primi and stellar fresh fish *elbana* (whitefish baked with vegetables and potatoes). The bustling, casual trattoria is in the old center of Portoferraio, at the beginning of the road to the old Medici walls. **Known for:** gnocchetti di pesce (bite-sized potato dumplings with a hearty fish sauce); pesce all'elbana (fish of the day baked with potatoes and vegetables); great waitstaff. (\$) Average main: €16 ✉ Salita del Falcone 2, Portoferraio ☎ 0565/914650 🌐 [www.ristorantelido.org](http://www.ristorantelido.org) 🕒 Closed mid-Dec.–mid-Feb.

## h Hotels

### Hermitage

\$\$\$\$ | HOTEL | This hotel on a private bay provides access to a sandy white beach from the bar and restaurant. **Pros:** wide range of sports equipment; several good restaurants; on a private beach and bay. **Cons:** a car is necessary; can get very crowded; books up quickly. (\$) Rooms from: €482 ✉ Strada della Biodola 1, 8 km (5 miles) west of Portoferraio, Portoferraio ☎ 0565/9740 🌐 [www.hotelhermitage.it](http://www.hotelhermitage.it) 🕒 Closed Oct.–Mar. ↗ 130 rooms 🍴🌐 No meals.

### Rio sul Mare

\$ | B&B/INN | Convenient to Rio Marina's charming town center and gravel beach, this comfortable hotel has pretty sea views, especially from one of the five rooms that have terraces facing the sea. **Pros:** close to town center; very attractive sea views from all rooms; great value for money. **Cons:** not all rooms have a/c; the nearby beach is rocky; service inconsistent. (\$) Rooms from: €85 ✉ Via Palestro 31, Rio Marina ☎ 0565/924225 🌐 [www.hotelriomarina.com](http://www.hotelriomarina.com) 🕒 Closed Nov.–Mar. ↗ 35 rooms 🍴🌐 Free breakfast.

## a Activities

### BEACHES

Elba's most celebrated beaches are the sandy stretches at **Biodola**, **Procchio**, and **Marina di Campo**, but the entire island—and particularly the westernmost section, encircling Monte Capanne—is ringed with beautiful coastline. Indeed, it seems every sleepy town has its own perfect tiny beach. Try **Cavoli** and **Fetovaia** anytime but July and August, when the car-accessible beaches on the island are packed (there are also some accessible only by boat, such as the black-sand beach of **Punta Nera**).

### WATER SPORTS

#### Il Viottolo

**BICYCLING** | Adventurous types can rent sea kayaks and mountain bikes from this tour operator, or participate in three-day guided excursions on land or by sea. ✉ *Via Puccini 55, Marina di Campo* ☎ 329/7367100 🌐 [www.ilviottolo.com](http://www.ilviottolo.com).

#### Spaziomare

**BOATING** | If you are hoping to rent a motorboat for a half or full day, this is the place. Sailboats to rent by the week are also available. ✉ *Via Vittorio Veneto 13, Porto Azzurro* ☎ 0565/95112 🌐 [www.spaziomare.it](http://www.spaziomare.it).

#### Subnow

**WATER SPORTS** | Contact this group of experienced divers for information on diving excursions in the waters of Elba's National Marine Park. ✉ *Via della Foce 32, Località La Foce, Marina di Campo* ☎ 348/1580 495 🌐 [www.subnow.it](http://www.subnow.it).

# Capraia

60 km (35 miles) west of Massa Marittima, 90 km (55 miles) west of Siena, 110 km (66 miles) southwest of Florence.

## GETTING HERE

Car ferry service from Livorno is provided by Toremar. The trip takes 2½ hours.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACTS Capraia Tourism Office.** ✉ Via Assunzione 72 ☎  
0586/905071 🌐 [www.prolococapraiaisola.it](http://www.prolococapraiaisola.it)

## S Sights

### Capraia

**ISLAND** | Only a handful of people actually live on the island of Capraia, which is frequented mainly by sailors. It's a rocky and hilly unspoiled national park, with only one sandy beach, **Cala della Mortola**, on the northern end of the island; the rest of the coast is a succession of cliffs and deep green coves with pretty rock formations. The 2½-hour ferry trip departs from Livorno and pulls in at the town of **Capraia Isola**, dominated by the Fortezza di San Giorgio up above. Nearby, an archway leads to an area that was once a prison.

## a Activities

### Capraia Diving Club

**SCUBA DIVING** | Capraia's clear waters and undersea life draw raves from scuba divers. Scuba-diving equipment, boats for rent, and the guidance of qualified instructors are available through this diving service. ✉ Via Assunzione 100/B, Capraia Isola ☎ 333/3172333 🌐 [www.capraia diving.it](http://www.capraia diving.it)



## Chapter 8

# UMBRIA AND THE MARCHES

Updated by  
Liz Humphreys



 Sights  
★★★★★

 Restaurants  
★★★★★

 Hotels  
★★★★★

 Shopping  
★★★★☆

 Nightlife  
★★☆☆☆



# WELCOME TO UMBRIA AND THE MARCHES

## TOP REASONS TO GO

- ★ **Palazzo Ducale, Urbino:** A visit here reveals more about the ideals of the Renaissance than a shelf of history books could.
- ★ **Assisi, shrine to St. Francis:** Recharge your soul in this rose-color hill town with a visit to the gentle saint's majestic basilica, adorned with great frescoes.
- ★ **Spoletto, Umbria's musical Mecca:** Crowds descend and prices ascend here during summer's Festival dei Due Mondi, but Spoleto's hushed charm enchants year-round.
- ★ **Tantalizing truffles:** Are Umbria's celebrated "black diamonds" coveted for their pungent flavor, their rarity, or their power in the realm of romance?
- ★ **Orvieto's Duomo:** Arresting visions of heaven and hell on the facade and brilliant frescoes within make this Gothic cathedral a dazzler.



- 1 Perugia.** Umbria's largest town.
- 2 Assisi.** The city of St. Francis.
- 3 Gubbio.** A medieval mountainous town in North Umbria.
- 4 Deruta.** 14th-century town is famous for its ceramics.
- 5 Spello.** A hilltop town is known for its cuisine.

- 6 Montefalco.** Its nickname is the “balcony over Umbria.”
- 7 Spoleto.** Come to see the Piazza del Duomo.
- 8 Todi.** Considered Umbria’s prettiest hill town.
- 9 Orvieto.** Carved out volcanic rock and known today for wine and shoe shopping.
- 10 Narni.** Quiet town with few tourists and subterranean ruins.
- 11 Valnerina.** Valley of the River Nera.
- 12 Urbino.** See the Palazzo Ducale here.
- 13 Loreto.** Home to the House of the Virgin Mary.
- 14 Ascoli Piceno.** A major producer of fruit and olives in the region.

## Birthplace of saints and home to some of the country's greatest artistic treasures, central Italy is a collection of misty green valleys and picture-perfect hill towns laden with centuries of history.

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Umbria and the Marches are the Italian countryside as you've imagined it: verdant farmland, steep hillsides topped with medieval fortresses, and winding country roads. No single town here has the extravagant wealth of art and architecture of Florence, Rome, or Venice, but this works in your favor; small jewels of towns feel knowable, not overwhelming. And the cultural cupboard is far from bare. Orvieto's cathedral and Assisi's basilica are two of the most important sights in Italy, while Perugia, Todi, Gubbio, and Spoleto are rich in art and architecture.

East of Umbria, the Marches (Le Marche to Italians) stretch between the Apennines and the Adriatic Sea. It's a region of great turreted castles on high peaks defending passes and roads—a testament to the centuries of battle that have taken place here. Rising majestically in Urbino is a splendid palace, built by Federico da Montefeltro, where the humanistic ideals of the Renaissance came to their fullest flower, while the town of Ascoli Piceno can lay claim to one of the most beautiful squares in Italy. Virtually every small town in the region has a castle, church, or museum worth a visit—but even without them, you'd still be compelled to stop for the interesting streets, panoramic views, and natural beauty.

### MAJOR REGIONS

Umbria's largest town, **Perugia**, is home to some of Perugino's great frescoes. **Assisi**, the city of St. Francis is a major pilgrimage site but still maintains its medieval hill-town character. The quiet towns lying around Perugia include **Deruta**, which produces exceptional ceramics. **Spoleto** includes the Piazza del Duomo, the Filippo Lippi frescoes in the cathedral, and the massive castle towering over the town. Of central Italy's many hill towns, none has a more impressive setting than **Orvieto**, perched on a plateau

1,000 feet above the surrounding valley. East of **Umbria**, the steep, twisting roads of this region lead to well-preserved medieval towns before settling down to the sandy beaches of the Adriatic.

# Planner

## Making the Most of Your Time


Umbria is a nicely compact collection of character-rich hill towns; you can settle in one, then explore the others, as well as the countryside and forest in between, on day trips.

Perugia, Umbria's largest and liveliest city, is a logical choice for your base, particularly if you're arriving from the north. If you want something a little quieter, virtually any other town in the region will suit your purposes; even Assisi, which overflows with bus tours during the day, is delightfully quiet in the evening and early morning. Spoleto and Orvieto are the most developed towns to the south, but they're still of modest proportions.

If you have the time to venture farther afield, consider trips to Gubbio, northeast of Perugia, and Urbino, in the Marches. Both are worth the time it takes to reach them, and both make for pleasant overnight stays. In southern Umbria, Valnerina and the Piano Grande are out-of-the-way spots with the region's best hiking.

## Festivals

### **Eurochocolate Festival**

If you've got a sweet tooth and are visiting in fall, book early and head to Perugia for the Eurochocolate Festival. This is one of the biggest chocolate festivals in the world, with a million visitors, and is held over a week in late October.  [www.eurochocolate.com](http://www.eurochocolate.com).

### **Festival dei Due Mondi**

Each summer Umbria hosts one of Italy's biggest arts festivals: Spoleto's Festival of the Two Worlds. Starting out as a classical music festival, it has now evolved into one of Italy's brightest gatherings of arts aficionados. Running from late June through mid-July, it features modern and classical music, theater, dance, and opera. Increasingly there are also a number of

small cinema producers and their films. 🌐 [www.festivaldispoieto.com](http://www.festivaldispoieto.com).

### **Umbria Jazz Festival**

Perugia is hopping for 10 days in July, when more than a million people flock to see famous names in contemporary music perform at the Umbria Jazz Festival. In recent years the stars have included Wynton Marsalis, Sting, Eric Clapton, Lady Gaga, Tony Bennett, and Elton John. There's also a shorter Jazz Winter festival from late December to early January. 🌐 [www.umbriajazz.com](http://www.umbriajazz.com).

If you want to attend an event, make arrangements in advance. During festival time, hotel rooms and restaurant tables are at a premium. A similar caveat applies for Assisi during religious festivals at Christmas, Easter, the feast of Saint Francis (October 4), and Calendimaggio (May 1), when pilgrims arrive en masse.

## **Getting Here and Around**

### **BUS TRAVEL**

Perugia's bus station is in Piazza Partigiani, which you can reach by taking the escalators from the town center.

Local bus services between all the major and minor towns of Umbria are good. Some of the routes in rural areas are designed to serve as many places as possible and are, therefore, quite roundabout and slow. Schedules change often, so consult with local tourist offices before setting out.

### **Flixbus**

Connections between Rome and Perugia and Perugia and Florence are provided by the bus company Flixbus. 🌐 [www.flixbus.com](http://www.flixbus.com).

### **Sulga Line**



Perugia is served by the Sulga Line, which has daily departures to Assisi, Città di Castello, Sansepolcro, Ravenna, Rome's Stazione Tiburtina, and Fiumicino airport in Rome. ☎️ 075/5009641 🌐 [www.sulga.eu](http://www.sulga.eu).

## CAR TRAVEL

On the western edge of the region is the Umbrian section of the Autostrada del Sole (A1), Italy's principal north–south highway. It links Florence and Rome with Orvieto and passes near Todi and Terni. The S3 intersects with the A1 and leads on to Assisi and Urbino. The Adriatica superhighway (A14) runs north–south along the coast, linking the Marches to Bologna and Venice.

The steep hills and deep valleys that make Umbria and the Marches so idyllic also make for challenging driving. Fortunately, the area has an excellent, modern road network, but be prepared for tortuous mountain roads if your explorations take you off the beaten track. Central Umbria is served by a major highway, the S75bis, which passes along the shore of Lake Trasimeno and ends in Perugia. Assisi is served by the modern highway S75; the S75 connects to the S3 and S3bis, which cover the heart of the region. Major inland routes connect coastal A14 to large towns in the Marches, but inland secondary roads in mountain areas can be winding and narrow.

## TRAIN TRAVEL

Several direct daily trains run by the Italian state railway, **Trenitalia** ( 892021  [www.trenitalia.com](http://www.trenitalia.com)), link Florence and Rome with Perugia and Assisi, and local service to the same area is available from Terontola (on the Rome–Florence line) and from Foligno (on the Rome–Ancona line). Intercity trains between Rome and Florence make stops in Orvieto, and the main Rome–Ancona line passes through Narni, Terni, Spoleto, and Foligno.

## Restaurants

As befits a landlocked territory, the cuisine of Umbria is firmly based on its fresh agricultural produce. Consequently, most restaurants in the region offer menus that are strictly seasonal, though locals have ensured that the food most associated with Umbria—*tartufi*, or truffles—is available year-round thanks to their mastery of freezing, drying, and preserving techniques. Truffles may be added to a variety of dishes, not least the local pastas *stringozzi* (also written *strengozzi* or *strangozzi*) and *ombrichelli*. Lamb, pork, and boar are the most common meats consumed in Umbria, while lentils grown around Castelluccio are also highly prized. Seafood from the



Adriatic predominates in the coastal Marches region, often made into *brodetto*, a savory fish soup. Inland, Ascoli Piceno is renowned for its stuffed green olives.

## Hotels

Virtually every older town, no matter how small, has some kind of hotel. A trend, particularly around Gubbio, Orvieto, and Todi, is to convert old villas, farms, and monasteries into first-class hotels. The natural splendor of the countryside more than compensates for the distance from town—provided you have a car. Hotels in town tend to be simpler than their country cousins, with a few notable exceptions in Spoleto, Gubbio, and Perugia. *Hotel reviews have been shortened. For full information, visit [Fodors.com](http://Fodors.com).*

## What It Costs in Euros

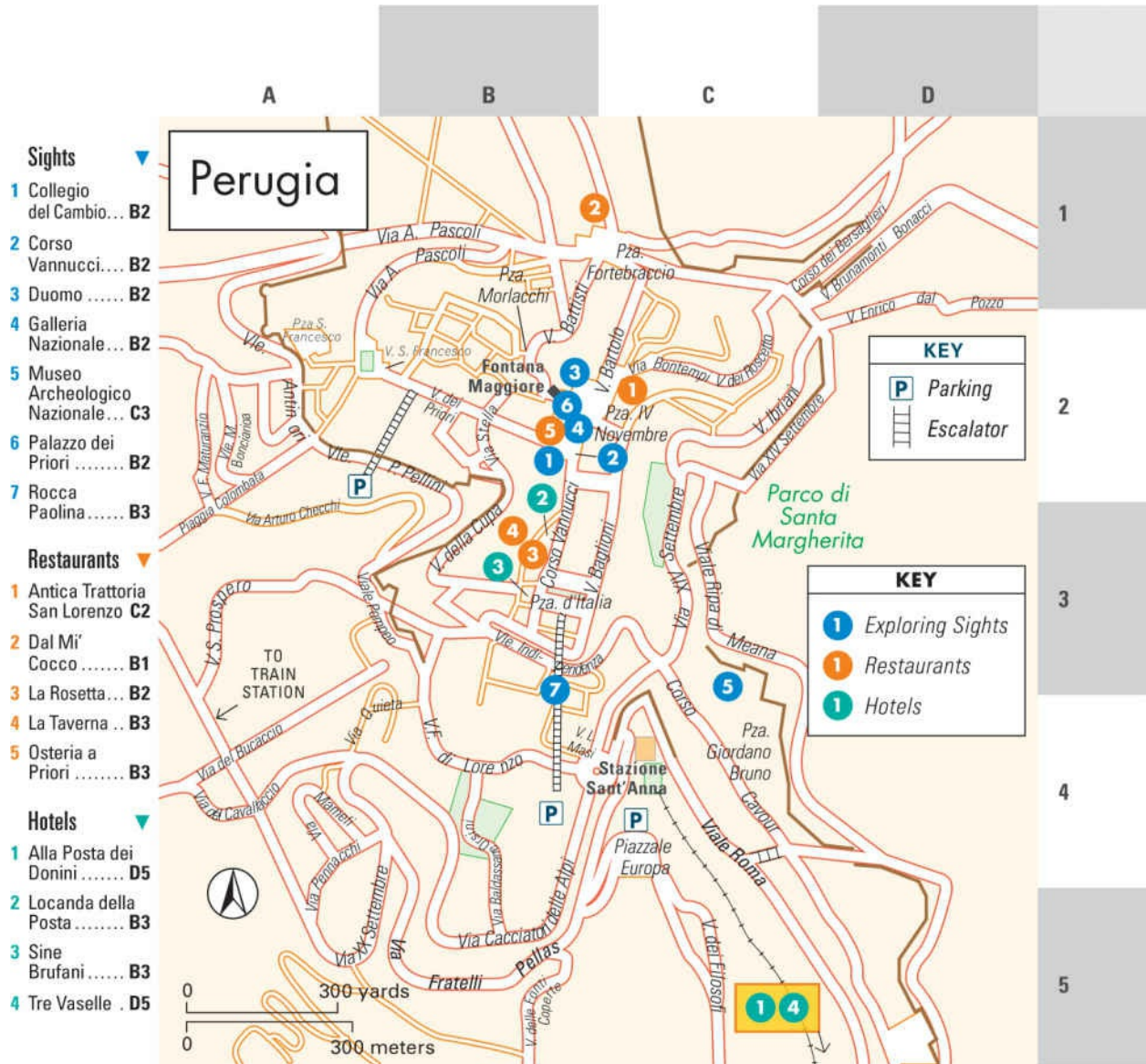
\$	\$\$	\$\$\$	\$\$\$\$
<b>RESTAURANTS</b>			
under €15	€15–€24	€25– €35	over €35
<b>HOTELS</b>			
under €125	€125– €200	€201– €300	over €300

## Visitor Information

### **Umbria regional tourism office**

Umbria's regional tourism office is in Perugia. The staff are well informed

about the area and can give you a wide selection of leaflets and maps to assist you during your trip. It's open daily 9–6. ✉ *Piazza Matteotti 18, Perugia* ☎ 075/5736458 🌐 [www.umbriatourism.it](http://www.umbriatourism.it).



# Perugia

Perugia is a majestic, handsome, wealthy city, and with its trendy boutiques, refined cafés, and grandiose architecture, it doesn't try to hide its affluence. A student population of around 30,000 means that the city, with a permanent population of about 170,000, is abuzz with activity throughout the year. Umbria Jazz, one of the region's most important music festivals, attracts music lovers from around the world every July, and Eurochocolate, the international chocolate festival, is an irresistible draw each October for anyone with a sweet tooth.

## GETTING HERE AND AROUND

The best approach to the city is by train. The area around the station doesn't attest to the rest of Perugia's elegance, but buses running from the station to Piazza d'Italia, the heart of the old town, are frequent. If you're in a hurry, take the *minimetro*, a one-line subway, to Stazione della Cupa. If you're driving to Perugia and your hotel doesn't have parking facilities, leave your car in one of the lots close to the center. Electronic displays indicate the location of lots and the number of spaces free. If you park in the Piazza Partigiani, take the escalators that pass through the fascinating subterranean excavations of the Roman foundations of the city and lead to the town center.

## S Sights

### **Collegio del Cambio** (*Bankers' Guild Hall*)

**MUSEUM** | These elaborate rooms, on the ground floor of the **Palazzo dei Priori**, served as the meeting hall and chapel of the guild of bankers and money changers. Most of the frescoes were completed by the most important Perugian painter of the Renaissance, Pietro Vannucci, better known as Perugino. He included a remarkably honest self-portrait on one of the pilasters. The iconography includes common religious themes, such as the Nativity and the Transfiguration seen on the end walls. On the left wall are female figures representing the virtues, and beneath them are the heroes and

sages of antiquity. On the right wall are figures presumed to have been painted in part by Perugino's most famous pupil, Raphael. (His hand, experts say, is most apparent in the figure of Fortitude.) The *cappella* (chapel) of San Giovanni Battista has frescoes painted by Giannicola di Paolo, another student of Perugino's. ✉ *Corso Vannucci 25* ☎ *075/5728599* 🌐 [www.collegiodelcambio.it](http://www.collegiodelcambio.it) 🗺️ €5 🕒 *Closed Sun. afternoon, also Mon. afternoon Nov.–Mar.*

## Corso Vannucci

**NEIGHBORHOOD** | A string of elegantly connected palazzi expresses the artistic nature of this city center, the heart of which is concentrated along Corso Vannucci. Stately and broad, this pedestrians-only street runs from Piazza Italia to Piazza IV Novembre. Along the way, the entrances to many of Perugia's side streets might tempt you to wander off and explore. But don't stray too far as evening falls, when Corso Vannucci fills with Perugians out for their evening  *Passeggiata*, a pleasant predinner stroll that may include a pause for an aperitif at one of the many bars that line the street. ✉ *Perugia.*

## Duomo

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | Severe yet mystical, the Cathedral of San Lorenzo is most famous for being the home of the wedding ring of the Virgin Mary, stolen by the Perugians in 1488 from the nearby town of Chiusi. The ring, kept high up in a red-curtained vault in the chapel immediately to the left of the entrance, is stored under lock and key—15 locks, to be precise—most of the year. It's shown to the public on July 30 (the day it was brought to Perugia) and the second-to-last Sunday in January (Mary's wedding anniversary). The cathedral itself dates from the Middle Ages, and has many additions from the 15th and 16th centuries. The most visually interesting element is the altar to the Madonna of Grace; an elegant fresco on a column at the right of the entrance of the altar depicts La Madonna delle Grazie. Sections of the church may be closed to visitors during religious services.

The **Museo Capitolare** displays a large array of precious objects associated with the cathedral, including vestments, vessels, and manuscripts. Outside the Duomo is the elaborate **Fontana Maggiore**, which dates from 1278. It's adorned with zodiac figures and symbols of the seven arts. ✉ *Piazza IV*

Novembre ☎ 075/5723832 🌐 [www.cattedrale.perugia.it](http://www.cattedrale.perugia.it) 🏛️ Museum €6 🕒  
Museum closed Mon.

### ★ Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria

**MUSEUM** | The region's most comprehensive art gallery is housed on the fourth floor of the **Palazzo dei Priori**. Enhanced by skillfully lit displays and computers that allow you to focus on the works' details and background information, the collection includes work by native artists—most notably Pintoricchio (1454–1513) and Perugino (circa 1450–1523)—and others of the Umbrian and Tuscan schools, among them Gentile da Fabriano (1370–1427), Duccio (circa 1255–1318), Fra Angelico (1387–1455), Fiorenzo di Lorenzo (1445–1525), and Piero della Francesca (1420–92). In addition to paintings, the gallery has frescoes, sculptures, and some superb examples of crucifixes from the 13th and 14th centuries. Some rooms are dedicated to Perugia itself, showing how the medieval city evolved. ✉ *Corso Vannucci 19, Piazza IV Novembre* ☎ 075/58668415 🌐 [www.gallerianazionaledellumbria.it](http://www.gallerianazionaledellumbria.it) 🏛️ €8 🕒  
Closed Mon.

### Museo Archeologico Nazionale

**MUSEUM** | An excellent collection of Etruscan artifacts from throughout the region sheds light on Perugia as a flourishing Etruscan city long before it fell under Roman domination in 310 BC. Little else remains of Perugia's mysterious ancestors, although the Arco di Augusto, in Piazza Fortebraccio, the northern entrance to the city, is of Etruscan origin. ✉ *Piazza G. Bruno 10* ☎ 075/5727141 🌐 [www.polomusealeumbria.beniculturali.it](http://www.polomusealeumbria.beniculturali.it) 🏛️ €5.

### Palazzo dei Priori (*Palace of the Priors*)

**GOVERNMENT BUILDING** | A series of elegant connected buildings, the palazzo serves as Perugia's city hall and houses three of the city's museums. The buildings string along Corso Vannucci and wrap around the Piazza IV Novembre, where the original entrance is located. The steps here lead to the **Sala dei Notari** (Notaries' Hall). Other entrances lead to the **Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria**, the **Collegio del Cambio**, and the **Collegio della Mercanzia**. The Sala dei Notari, which dates back to the 13th century and was the original meeting place of the town merchants, had become the seat of the notaries by the second half of the 15th century. Wood beams and an interesting array of frescoes attributed to Maestro di Farneto embellish the

room. Coats of arms and crests line the back and right lateral walls; you can spot some famous figures from Aesop's *Fables* on the left wall. The palazzo facade is adorned with symbols of Perugia's pride and past power: the griffin is the city symbol, and the lion denotes Perugia's allegiance to the Guelph (or papal) cause. ✉ *Piazza IV Novembre 25* 🆓 *Free.*

### Rocca Paolina

CASTLE/PALACE | A labyrinth of little streets, alleys, and arches, this underground city was originally part of a fortress built at the behest of Pope Paul III between 1540 and 1543 to confirm papal dominion over the city. Parts of it were destroyed after the end of papal rule, but much still remains. Begin your visit by taking the escalators that descend through the subterranean ruins from Piazza Italia down to Via Masi. In the summer this is the coolest place in the city. ✉ *Piazza Italia* 🆓 *Free.*

## r Restaurants

### Antica Trattoria San Lorenzo

\$\$ | UMBRIAN | Both the food and the service are outstanding at this popular small, brick-vaulted eatery next to the Duomo. Particular attention is paid to adapting traditional Umbrian cuisine to the modern palate and there's also a nice variety of seafood dishes on the menu—the *pacchero di Gagnano* (pasta with smoked eggplant, cod, clams, scampi, and prawns) is a real treat. **Known for:** impeccable service; quality versions of local recipes; good vegetarian choices. 💰 *Average main: €22* ✉ *Piazza Danti 19/a* 📞 *075/5721956* 🌐 [www.anticatrattoriasanlorenzo.com](http://www.anticatrattoriasanlorenzo.com) 🕒 *Closed Sun.*

### La Rosetta

\$\$ | ITALIAN | The dining room of the hotel of the same name is a peaceful, elegant spot for travelers seeking to get away from the bustle of central Perugia; in winter you dine inside under medieval vaults, and in summer, in the cool courtyard. The food is simple but reliable, and flawlessly served. **Known for:** elegant, old-fashioned setting; refined versions of local meat dishes; professional service. 💰 *Average main: €18* ✉ *Piazza d'Italia 19* 📞 *075/5720841* 🌐 [www.hotelarosetta.it/ristorante](http://www.hotelarosetta.it/ristorante).

## Umbria Through the Ages S

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The earliest inhabitants of Umbria, the Umbri, were thought by the Romans to be the most ancient inhabitants of Italy. Little is known about them; with the coming of Etruscan culture the tribe fled into the mountains in the eastern portion of the region. The Etruscans, who founded some of the great cities of Umbria, were in turn supplanted by the Romans. Unlike Tuscany and other regions of central Italy, Umbria had few powerful medieval families to exert control over the cities in the Middle Ages—its proximity to Rome ensured that it would always be more or less under papal domination.

In the center of the country, Umbria has for much of its history been a battlefield where armies from north and south clashed. Hannibal destroyed a Roman army on the shores of Lake Trasimeno, and the bloody course of the interminable Guelph–Ghibelline conflict of the Middle Ages was played out here. Dante considered Umbria the most violent place in Italy. Trophies of war still decorate the Palazzo dei Priori in Perugia, and the little town of Gubbio continues a warlike rivalry begun in the Middle Ages—every year it challenges the Tuscan town of Sansepolcro to a crossbow tournament. Today the bowmen shoot at targets, but neither side has forgotten that 500 years ago they were shooting at each other.

In spite of—or perhaps because of—this bloodshed, Umbria has produced more than its share of Christian saints. The most famous is St. Francis, the decidedly pacifist saint whose life shaped the Church of his time. His great shrine at Assisi is visited by hundreds of thousands of pilgrims each year. St. Clare, his devoted follower, was Umbria-born, as were St. Benedict, St. Rita of Cascia, and the patron saint of lovers, St. Valentine.

### La Taverna

\$\$ | UMBRIAN | Medieval steps lead to a rustic two-story space where wine bottles and artful clutter decorate the walls. The regional menu features lots of delicious house-made pastas and grilled meats prepared by chef Claudio, served up in substantial portions, plus generous shavings of truffle in season. **Known for:** Umbrian specialties; swift and efficient service; welcoming ambience. 📍 *Average main: €18* ✉ *Via delle Streghe 8, off Corso Vannucci* ☎ *075/5724128* 🌐 [www.ristorantelataverna.com](http://www.ristorantelataverna.com).

## ★ Osteria a Priori

\$ | MODERN ITALIAN | This charming wine-and-olive-oil shop with a restaurant (with vaulted ceilings and exposed brick) tucked into the back offers up small plates using ingredients with a “zero-kilometer” philosophy: everything comes from local and artisanal Umbrian producers. Regional cheeses, homemade pastas, and slow-cooked meats steal the show and, as might be expected, the selection of wine is top-notch. **Known for:** all Umbrian products; knowledgeable servers; local, nontouristy atmosphere. [D] *Average main: €12* ✉ *Via dei Priori 39* ☎ *075/5727098* 🌐 [www.osteriaapriori.it](http://www.osteriaapriori.it) 🕒 *Closed Sun.*

## h Hotels

### Alla Posta dei Donini

\$ | HOTEL | Beguilingly comfortable guest rooms are set on lovely grounds, where gardeners go quietly about their business. **Pros:** plush atmosphere; a quiet and private getaway; great restaurant. **Cons:** outside Perugia; uninteresting village; spa sometimes overcrowded. [D] *Rooms from: €109* ✉ *Via Deruta 43, 15 km (9 miles) south of Perugia, San Martino in Campo* ☎ *075/609132* 🌐 [www.postadonini.it](http://www.postadonini.it) ↗ *48 rooms* 🕒 *No meals.*

### Locanda della Posta

\$\$ | HOTEL | Renovations have left the lobby and other public areas rather bland, but the rooms in this converted 18th-century palazzo are soothingly decorated in muted colors. **Pros:** some fine views; central location; exudes good taste and refinement. **Cons:** some street noise; some small rooms; no public areas. [D] *Rooms from: €139* ✉ *Corso Vannucci 97* ☎ *075/5728925* 🌐 [www.locandadellapostahotel.it](http://www.locandadellapostahotel.it) ↗ *17 rooms* 🕒 *Free breakfast.*

### Sina Brufani







\$\$ | HOTEL | Though a tad old-fashioned, this elegant centrally located hotel dating from 1884 is the most upscale accommodation in town. **Pros:** wonderful location; unique spa area; excellent views from many rooms. **Cons:** could use a refresh; in-house restaurant not up to par; service can be



hit-or-miss.  Rooms from: €155  Piazza Italia 12  075/5732541   
[www.sinahotels.com/en/h/sina-brufani-perugia](http://www.sinahotels.com/en/h/sina-brufani-perugia)  94 rooms  No meals.

## Tre Vaselle

**\$\$** | **HOTEL** | Rooms spread throughout four stone buildings are spacious and graced with floors of typical red-clay Tuscan tiles. **Pros:** perfect for visiting the Torgiano wine area and Deruta; friendly staff; nice pool. **Cons:** somewhat far from Perugia; in center of uninspiring village; service occasionally falters.




 Rooms from: €159  Via Garibaldi 48, Torgiano  075/9880447   
[www.3vaselle.it](http://www.3vaselle.it)  51 rooms  No meals.

## p Performing Arts

With its large student population, the city has plenty to offer in the way of bars and clubs. The best ones are around the city center, off Corso Vannucci. *Viva Perugia* is a good source of information about nightlife; the monthly, sold at newsstands, has a section in English.

## MUSIC FESTIVALS

### Sagra Musicale Umbra

**MUSIC FESTIVALS** | Held mid-September, the Sagra Musicale Umbra celebrates sacred music in Perugia and in several towns throughout the region.  Perugia  338/8668820 information and bookings in Sept., 075/5722271 general information  [www.perugiamusicaclassica.com](http://www.perugiamusicaclassica.com).

## b Shopping

Take a stroll down any of Perugia's main streets, including Corso Vannucci, Via dei Priori, Via Oberdan, and Via Sant'Ercolano, and you'll see many well-known designer boutiques and specialty shops.

The most typical thing to buy in Perugia is some Perugina chocolate, which you can find almost anywhere. The best-known chocolates made by Perugina (now owned by Nestlé) are the chocolate-and-hazelnut-filled nibbles called Baci (literally, "kisses"). They're wrapped in silver foil that includes a sliver

of paper, like the fortune in a fortune cookie, with multilingual romantic sentiments or sayings.

## Assisi

The small town of Assisi is one of the Christian world's most important pilgrimage sites and home of the Basilica di San Francesco—built to honor St. Francis (1182–1226) and erected in swift order after his death. The peace and serenity of the town is a welcome respite after the hustle and bustle of some of Italy's major cities.

Like most other towns in the region, Assisi began as an Umbri settlement in the 7th century BC and was conquered by the Romans 400 years later. The town was Christianized by St. Rufino, its patron saint, in the 3rd century, but it's the spirit of St. Francis, a patron saint of Italy and founder of the Franciscan monastic order, that's felt throughout its narrow medieval streets. The famous 13th-century basilica was decorated by the greatest artists of the period.

### **GETTING HERE AND AROUND**

Assisi lies on the Terontola–Foligno rail line, with almost hourly connections to Perugia and direct trains to Rome and Florence several times a day. The Stazione Centrale is 4 km (2½ miles) from town, with a bus service about every half hour. Assisi is easily reached from the A1 autostrada (Rome–Florence) and the S75b highway. The walled town is closed to traffic, so cars must be left in the parking lots at Porta San Pietro, near Porta Nuova, or beneath Piazza Matteotti. Pay your parking fee at the *cassa* (ticket booth) before you return to your car to get a ticket to insert in the machine that will allow you to exit. It's a short but sometimes steep walk into the center of town; frequent minibuses (buy tickets from a newsstand or tobacco shop near where you park your car) make the rounds for weary pilgrims.

## **S Sights**

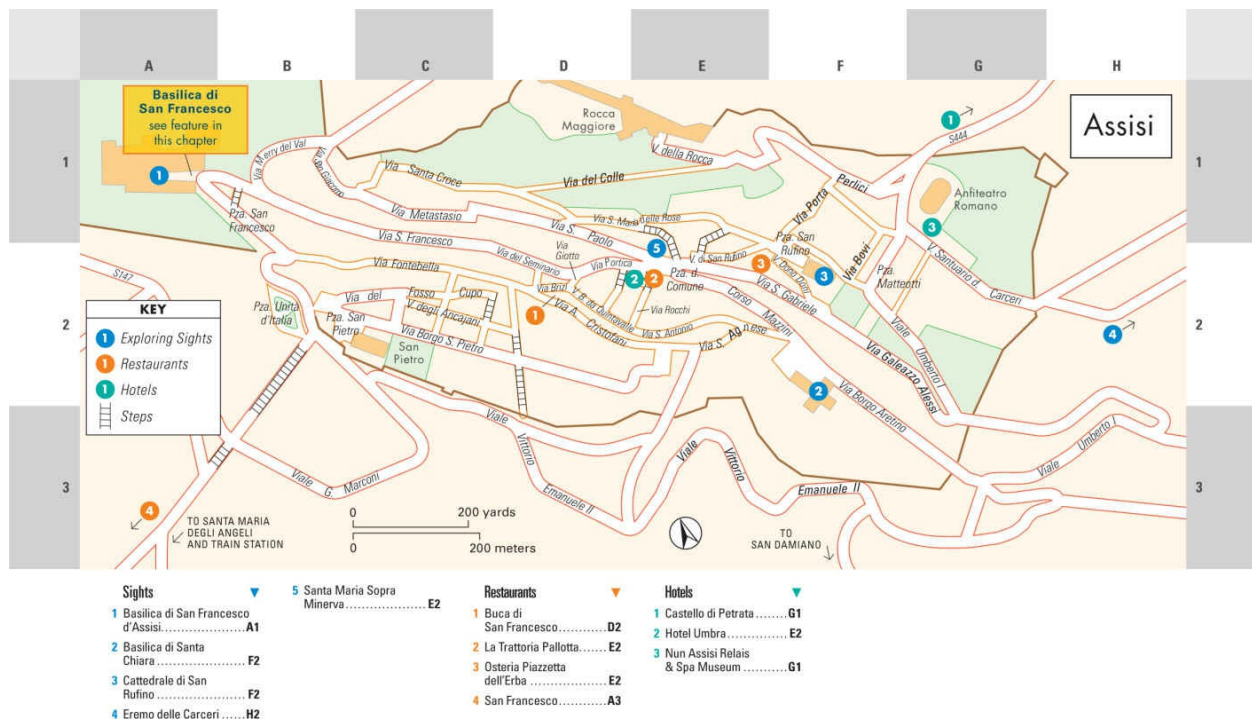
Assisi is pristinely medieval in architecture and appearance, owing in large part to relative neglect from the 16th century until 1926, when the celebration of the 700th anniversary of St. Francis's death brought more than 2 million

visitors. Since then, pilgrims have flocked here in droves, and today several million arrive each year to pay homage. But not even the constant flood of visitors to this town of just 3,000 residents can spoil the singular beauty of this significant religious center, the home of some of the Western tradition's most important works of art. The hill on which Assisi sits rises dramatically from the flat plain, and the town is dominated by a medieval castle at the very top.

Even though Assisi is sometimes besieged by busloads of sightseers who clamor to visit the famous basilica, it's difficult not to be charmed by the tranquillity of the town and its medieval architecture. Once you've seen the basilica, stroll through the town's narrow winding streets to see beautiful vistas of the nearby hills and valleys peeking through openings between the buildings.

### ★ **Basilica di San Francesco**

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | The basilica isn't one church but two: the Gothic church on the upper level, and the Romanesque church on the lower level. Work on this two-tiered monolith was begun in 1228. Both churches are magnificently decorated artistic treasure-houses, covered floor to ceiling with some of Europe's finest frescoes: the Lower Basilica is dim and full of candlelight shadows, while the Upper Basilica is bright and airy. In the **Upper Church**, the magnificent frescoes from 13th-century Italian painter Giotto, painted when he was only in his twenties, show that he was a pivotal artist in the development of Western painting. He broke away from the stiff, unnatural styles of earlier generations to move toward realism and three-dimensionality. The **Lower Church** features frescos by celebrated Sieneese painters Simone Martini and Pietro Lorenzetti, as well as by Giotto (or his assistants). The basilica's dress code is strictly enforced—no bare shoulders or bare knees are permitted. ✉ *Piazza di San Francesco* ☎ 075/819001 🌐 [www.sanfrancescoassisi.org](http://www.sanfrancescoassisi.org).



## Basilica di Santa Chiara

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | The lovely, wide piazza in front of this church is reason enough to visit. The red-and-white-striped facade frames the piazza's panoramic view over the Umbrian plains. Santa Chiara is dedicated to St. Clare, one of the earliest and most fervent of St. Francis's followers and the founder of the order of the Poor Ladies—or Poor Clares—which was based on the Franciscan monastic order. The church contains Clare's body, and in the **Cappella del Crocifisso** (on the right) is the cross that spoke to St. Francis. A heavily veiled nun of the Poor Clares order is usually stationed before the cross in adoration of the image. ✉ *Piazza Santa Chiara* ☎ 075/812216 🌐 [www.assisisantachiara.it](http://www.assisisantachiara.it).

## Cattedrale di San Rufino

**MUSEUM** | St. Francis and St. Clare were among those baptized in Assisi's Cattedrale, which was the principal church in town until the 12th century. The baptismal font has since been redecorated, but it's possible to see the crypt of St. Rufino, the bishop who brought Christianity to Assisi and was martyred on August 11, 238 (or 236 by some accounts). Admission to the crypt includes the small **Museo Capitolare**, with its detached frescoes and artifacts. ✉ *Piazza San Rufino* ☎ 075/812712 🌐 [www.assisimu-](http://www.assisimu-)

[seodiocesano.it](http://seodiocesano.it) 📧 Church free, Crypt and Museo Capitolare €4 🕒 Crypt and Museo Capitolare closed Wed.

### Eremo delle Carceri

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | About 4 km (2½ miles) east of Assisi is a monastery set in a dense wood against Monte Subasio: the Hermitage of Prisons. This was the place where St. Francis and his followers went to “imprison” themselves in prayer. The only site in Assisi that remains essentially unchanged since St. Francis’s time, the church and monastery are the kinds of tranquil places that St. Francis would have appreciated. The walk out from town is very pleasant, and many trails lead from here across the wooded hillside of Monte Subasio (now a protected forest), with beautiful vistas across the Umbrian countryside. True to their Franciscan heritage, the friars here are entirely dependent on alms from visitors. ✉ *Via Santuario delle Carceri, 4 km (2½ miles) east of Assisi* ☎ 075/812301 📧 Donations accepted.

### Santa Maria Sopra Minerva

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | Dating from the time of the Emperor Augustus (27 BC–AD 14), this structure was originally dedicated to the Roman goddess of wisdom, and in later times it was used as a monastery and prison before being converted into a church in the 16th century. The expectations raised by the perfect classical facade are not met by the interior, which was subjected to a thorough Baroque transformation in the 17th century. ✉ *Piazza del Comune* ☎ 075/812361.

## 🍴 Restaurants

### Buca di San Francesco

🇺🇸 | **UMBRIAN** | In summer, dine in a cool green garden; in winter, under the low brick arches of the cozy cellars. The unique settings and the first-rate fare make this central restaurant one of Assisi’s busiest; try the namesake homemade spaghetti *alla buca*, served with a roasted mushroom sauce. **Known for:** cozy atmosphere; historical surroundings; warm and welcoming service. 💰 *Average main: €14* ✉ *Via Eugenio Brizi 1* ☎ 075/812204 🌐 [buca-di-san-francesco.business.site](http://buca-di-san-francesco.business.site) 🕒 Closed Mon., and 10 days in late July.

## La Pallotta

\$\$ | UMBRIAN | At this homey, family-run trattoria with a crackling fireplace and stone walls, the women do the cooking and the men serve the food; try the *strangozzi alla pallotta* (thick spaghetti with a pesto of olives and mushrooms). Connected to the restaurant is an inn whose eight rooms have firm beds and some views across the rooftops of town. **Known for:** traditional local dishes; fast and courteous service; economical tourist menu. [D] Average main: €15 [E] Vicolo della Volta Pinta 3 [P] 075/8155273 [G] [www.trattoriapallotta.it](http://www.trattoriapallotta.it) [C] Closed Tues.

## Osteria Piazzetta dell'Erba

\$\$ | UMBRIAN | Hip service and sophisticated presentations attract locals, who enjoy Italian cuisine with unusual twists (think porcini mushroom risotto with blue cheese and blueberries), a nice selection of salads—unusual for an Umbrian restaurant—and intriguing desserts. The enthusiastic young team keep things running smoothly and the energy high. **Known for:** friendly staff; inventive dishes; intimate ambience. [D] Average main: €18 [E] Via San Gabriele dell'Addolorata 15/b [P] 075/815352 [G] [www.osterialapiazzetta.it](http://www.osterialapiazzetta.it) [C] Closed Mon., and a few wks in Jan. or Feb.

## San Francesco

\$\$ | UMBRIAN | An excellent view of the Basilica di San Francesco from the covered terrace is just one reason to enjoy this traditional restaurant, where Umbrian dishes are made with aromatic locally grown herbs. Menus change seasonally and include a fine selection of pastas and mains; appetizers and desserts are also especially good. **Known for:** excellent location; pleasing desserts; pleasant staff. [D] Average main: €20 [E] Via di San Francesco 52 [P] 075/813302 [G] [www.ristorantesanfrancesco.com](http://www.ristorantesanfrancesco.com) [C] Closed Wed. Nov.–Easter, and 1–2 wks early July.

## h Hotels

Advance reservations are essential at Assisi's hotels between Easter and October and over Christmas. Latecomers are often forced to stay in the modern town of Santa Maria degli Angeli, 8 km (5 miles) away. As a last-

minute option, you can always inquire at restaurants to see if they're renting out rooms.

Until the early 1980s, pilgrim hostels outnumbered ordinary hotels in Assisi, and they present an intriguing and economical alternative to conventional lodgings. They're usually called *conventi* or *ostelli* ("convents" or "hostels") because they're run by convents, churches, or other Catholic organizations. Rooms are spartan but peaceful. Check with the tourist office for a list.

### ★ **Castello di Petrata**

\$\$ | **HOTEL** | Wood beams and sections of exposed medieval stonework add a lot of character to this fortress built in the 14th century, while comfortable couches turn each individually decorated room into a delightful retreat. **Pros:** great views of town and countryside; medieval character; pool. **Cons:** slightly isolated; far from Assisi town center; limited choices in restaurant. [💰] *Rooms from: €180* ✉ *Via Petrata 25, Località Petrata* ☎ *075/815451* 🌐 [www.castellopetrata.it](http://www.castellopetrata.it) 🕒 *Closed Sun.–Wed. Jan.–mid-Mar.* 🛏 *20 rooms* 🍳🥗  
*Free breakfast.*

### **Hotel Umbra**

\$ | **HOTEL** | Rooms on the upper floors of this charming 16th-century town house near Piazza del Comune look out over the Assisi rooftops to the valley below, as does the sunny, vine-covered terrace. **Pros:** very central; pleasant small garden; excellent valley views from some rooms. **Cons:** difficult parking; some small rooms; uninspiring breakfasts. [💰] *Rooms from: €100* ✉ *Via degli Archi 6* ☎ *075/812240* 🌐 [www.hotelumbra.it](http://www.hotelumbra.it) 🕒 *Closed Nov.–late Mar.* 🛏 *24 rooms* 🍳🥗  
*Free breakfast.*

### ★ **Nun Assisi Relais & Spa Museum**

\$\$\$\$ | **HOTEL** | A monastery built in 1275 has been converted into a thoroughly contemporary, high-end place to stay with a fabulous spa carved out of 2,000-year-old Roman baths and within walking distance of Assisi's restaurants and shops. **Pros:** fantastic blend of the historic and modern; excellent restaurant; wonderful place to relax. **Cons:** on the expensive side; on-site parking costs extra; split-level rooms with stairs difficult for those with mobility issues. [💰] *Rooms from: €304* ✉ *Via Eremo delle Carceri 1A* ☎ *075/8155150* 🌐 [www.nunassisi.com](http://www.nunassisi.com) 🛏 *18 rooms* 🍳🥗  
*Free breakfast.*



## Gubbio

*35 km (22 miles) southeast of Città di Castello, 39 km (24 miles) northeast of Perugia, 92 km (57 miles) east of Arezzo.*

There's something otherworldly about this jewel of a medieval town tucked away in a mountainous corner of Umbria. Even at the height of summer, the cool serenity and quiet of Gubbio's streets remain intact. The town is perched on the slopes of Monte Ingino, meaning the streets are dramatically steep. Gubbio's relatively isolated position has kept it free of hordes of high-season visitors, and most of the year the city lives up to its Italian nickname, "La Città del Silenzio" (City of Silence). Parking in the central Piazza dei Quaranta Martiri—named for 40 hostages murdered by the Nazis in 1944—is easy and secure, and it's wise to leave your car in the piazza and explore the narrow streets on foot.

At Christmas, kitsch is king. From December 7 to January 10, colored lights are strung down the mountainside in a shape resembling an evergreen, the world's largest Christmas tree.

### GETTING HERE AND AROUND

The closest train station is Fossato di Vico, about 20 km (12 miles) from Gubbio. Twelve daily buses (five on Sunday) connect the train station with the city, a 30-minute trip. If you're driving from Perugia, take the SS298, which rises steeply up toward the Gubbio hills. The trip will take you one hour. There are also 11 buses a day (4 on Sunday) that leave from Perugia's Piazza Partigiani, the main Perugia bus terminal.

### VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACT Gubbio Tourism Office.** ✉ *Via della Repubblica 15* 📞  
075/9220693 🌐 [www.comune.gubbio.pg.it](http://www.comune.gubbio.pg.it)

## S Sights

## Basilica di Sant'Ubaldo

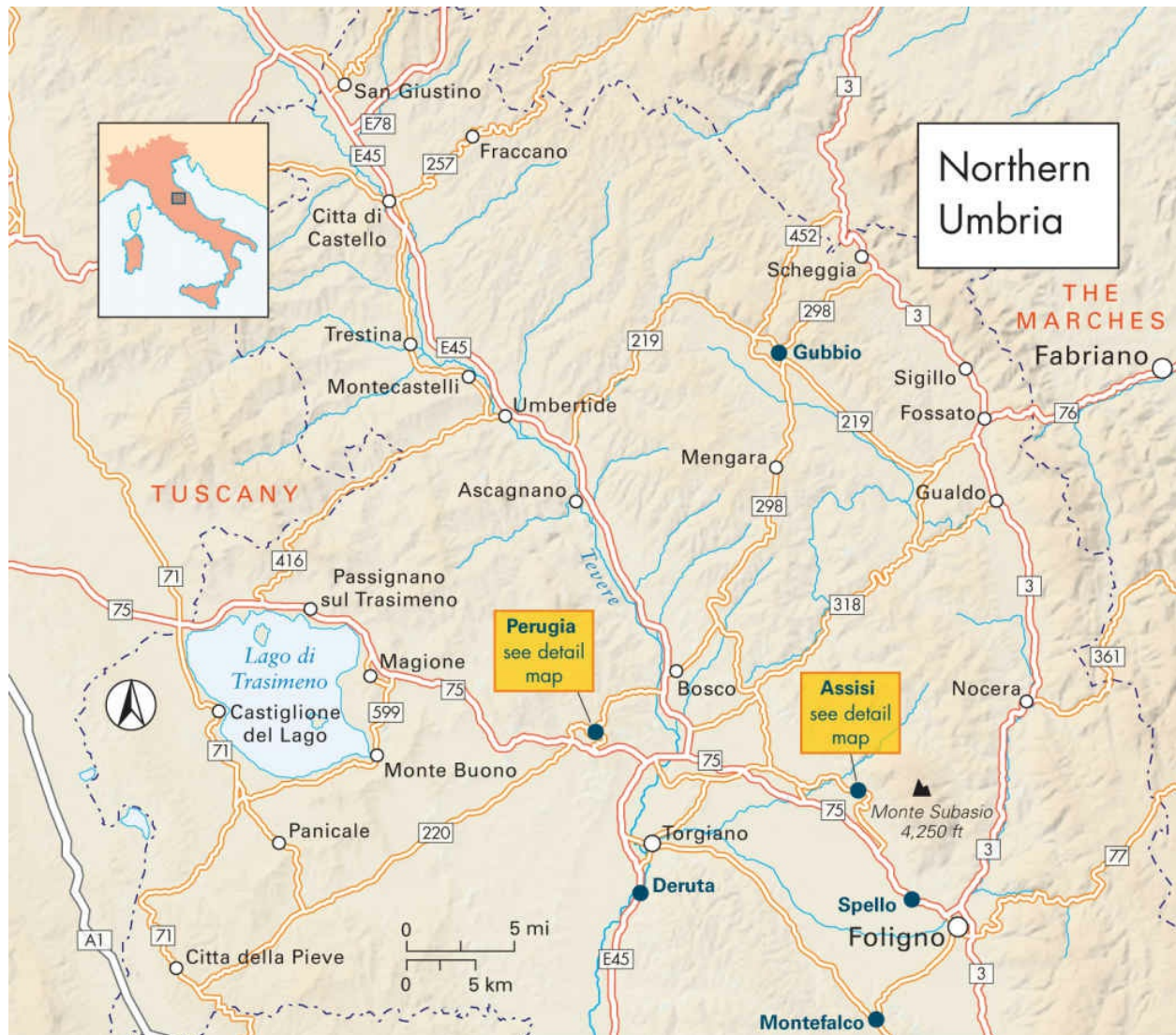
RELIGIOUS SITE | Gubbio's famous *ceri*—three 16-foot-tall pillars crowned with statues of Saints Ubaldo, George, and Anthony—are housed in this basilica atop Monte Ingino. The pillars are transported to the Palazzo dei Consoli on the first Sunday of May, in preparation for the Festa dei Ceri, one of central Italy's most spectacular festivals. ✉ *Monte Ingino* ☎ 075/9273872.

## Duomo

RELIGIOUS SITE | On a narrow street on the highest tier of the town, the Duomo dates from the 13th century, with some Baroque additions—in particular, a lavishly decorated bishop's chapel. ✉ *Via Ducale*.

## Funicular

TRANSPORTATION SITE (AIRPORT/BUS/FERRY/TRAIN) | For a bracing ride to the top of Monte Ingino, hop on the funicular that climbs the hillside just outside the city walls at the eastern end of town. It's definitely not for those who suffer from vertigo. Operating hours vary considerably from month to month; check the funicular's website. ✉ *Via San Girolamo* ☎ 075/9277507 🌐 [www.funiviagubbio.it](http://www.funiviagubbio.it) 🚏 From €4 🕒 Closed Wed.



## Palazzo dei Consoli

**GOVERNMENT BUILDING** | Gubbio's striking Piazza Grande is dominated by this medieval palazzo, attributed to a local architect known as Gattapone, who is still much admired by today's residents (though some scholars have suggested that the palazzo was in fact the work of another architect, Angelo da Orvieto). In the Middle Ages the Parliament of Gubbio assembled in the palace, which has become a symbol of the town and now houses a museum with a collection famous chiefly for the Tavole Eugubine. These seven bronze tablets are written in the ancient Umbrian language, employing Etruscan and Latin characters, and provide the best key to understanding this obscure tongue. Also in the museum is a fascinating miscellany of rare coins and earthenware pots. A lofty loggia provides exhilarating views over

Gubbio's roofscape and beyond. For a few days at the beginning of May, the palace also displays the famous *ceri*, the ceremonial wooden pillars at the center of Gubbio's annual festivities. ✉ [Piazza Grande](#) ☎ 075/9274298 🌐 [www.palazzodeiconsoli.it](http://www.palazzodeiconsoli.it) 🗳️ €7.

## Palazzo Ducale

CASTLE/PALACE | This scaled-down copy of the Palazzo Ducale in Urbino (Gubbio was once the possession of that city's ruling family, the Montefeltro) contains a small museum and a courtyard. Some of the public rooms offer magnificent views. ✉ [Via Federico da Montefeltro](#) ☎ 075/9275872 🌐 [www.comune.gubbio.pg.it](http://www.comune.gubbio.pg.it) 🗳️ €5 🕒 Closed Mon. morning Nov.–Mar.

## 🍴 Restaurants

### ★ Cucina 89

\$\$ | MODERN ITALIAN | This sleek bistro-style restaurant (think open kitchen, glossy black chairs, and couches to chill in near the back) from a talented young chef offers a taste of modern Italian that's far from typical. Traditional Umbrian ingredients like Chianina veal are combined with unusual items like rosé wine jelly and pears for unexpected and memorable tastes. **Known for:** Umbrian cuisine with a twist; good wine list; hip surroundings. 💰 *Average main: €18* ✉ [Corso G. Garibaldi 89](#) ☎ 075/5097173 🌐 [www.cucina89.it](http://www.cucina89.it) 🕒 Closed Mon.

### ★ Taverna del Lupo

\$\$ | UMBRIAN | One of the city's most famous taverns, this traditional spot has a menu that includes such indulgences as lasagna made in the Gubbian fashion, with ham and truffles, and the *suprema di faraono* (guinea fowl in a delicately spiced sauce) is a specialty; save room for the excellent dessert. The restaurant has two fine wine cellars and an extensive wine list. **Known for:** wide menu choice; alluring presentation; good wine list. 💰 *Average main: €19* ✉ [Via Ansidei 21](#) ☎ 075/9274368 🌐 [www.tavernadellupo.it](http://www.tavernadellupo.it).

## h Hotels

## ★ **Castello di Petroia**

\$\$ | HOTEL | This atmospheric 12th-century castle 15 km (9 miles) from Gubbio offers spacious antiques-filled rooms, some with decorated or beamed ceilings and stained glass, and excellent in-house dining for both dinner and breakfast. **Pros:** charming atmosphere; lovely breakfast buffet with handmade cakes and jams; outdoor swimming pool, in season. **Cons:** decor is on the simple side; beds could be comfier; temperature can be difficult to regulate in guest rooms. [D] *Rooms from: €147* [E] *Località Petroia* [P] *075/920287* [G] [www.petroia.it](http://www.petroia.it) [M] *Closed early Jan.–early Mar.* [R] *13 rooms* [F] *Free breakfast.*

## Deruta

7 km (4½ miles) south of Torgiano, 19 km (11 miles) southeast of Perugia.

This 14th-century medieval hill town is most famous for its ceramics. A drive through the countryside to visit the ceramics workshops is a good way to spend a morning, but be sure to stop in the town itself.

### GETTING HERE AND AROUND

From Perugia follow the directions for Rome and the E45 highway; Deruta has its own exits. There are also trains from the smaller St. Anna train station in Perugia. Take the train in the direction of Terni, and get off at Deruta.

### VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACT Deruta Tourism Office.** ✉ Piazza dei Consoli 4 📞 075/9711559 🌐 [www.turismoderuta.it](http://www.turismoderuta.it)

## S Sights

### **Museo Regionale della Ceramica** (*Regional Ceramics Museum*)

**MUSEUM** | It's only fitting that Deruta is home to an impressive ceramics museum, part of which extends into the adjacent 14th-century former convent of San Francesco. The museum tells the history of ceramics, with panels (in Italian and English) explaining artistic techniques and production processes, and also holds the country's largest collection of Italian ceramics—nearly 8,000 pieces are on display. The most notable are the Renaissance vessels using the *lustro* technique, which originated in Arab and Middle Eastern cultures some 500 years before coming into use in Italy in the late 1400s. Lustro, as the name sounds, gives the ceramics a rich finish, which is accomplished with the use of crushed precious materials such as gold and silver. ✉ Largo San Francesco 📞 075/9711000 🌐 [www.museoceramicadideruta.it](http://www.museoceramicadideruta.it) 📧 €7, includes Pinoteca Comunale 🕒 Closed Mon. and Tues. Nov.–June; closed Mon. July–Sept.

## **b Shopping**

Deruta is home to more than 70 ceramics shops. They offer a range of ceramics, including extra pieces from commissions for well-known British and North American tableware manufacturers. If you ask, most owners will take you to see where they actually throw, bake, and paint their wares. A drive along **Via Tiberina Nord** takes you past one shop after another.

# Spello

*12 km (7 miles) southeast of Assisi, 33 km (21 miles) north of Spoleto.*

Only a few minutes from Assisi by car or train, this hilltop town at the edge of Monte Subasio makes an excellent strategic base for exploring nearby towns, with well-appointed hotels. Spello's art scene includes first-rate frescoes by Pinturicchio and Perugino, and contemporary artists can be observed at work in studios around town. If antiquity is your passion, the town also has some intriguing Roman ruins. And the warm, rosy-beige tones of the local *pietra rossa* stone on the buildings brighten even cloudy days.

## GETTING HERE AND AROUND

Spello is an easy half-hour drive from Perugia. From the E45 highway, take the exit toward Assisi and Foligno. Merge onto the SS75 and take the Spello exit. There are also regular trains on the Perugia–Assisi line. Spello is 1 km (½ mile) from the train station, and buses run every 30 minutes for Porta Consolare. From Porta Consolare, continue up the steep main street that begins as Via Consolare and changes names several times as it crosses the little town, following the original Roman road. As it curves around, notice the winding medieval alleyways to the right and the more uniform Roman-era blocks to the left.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACT Spello Tourism Office.** ✉ *Piazza Matteotti 3* ☎ *0742/301009*  
🌐 [www.prospello.it](http://www.prospello.it).

## S Sights

### **Santa Maria Maggiore**

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | The two great Umbrian artists hold sway in this 16th-century basilica. Pinturicchio's vivid frescoes in the Cappella Baglioni (1501) are striking for their rich colors, finely dressed figures, and complex



symbolism. Among Pinturicchio's finest works are the *Nativity*, *Christ Among the Doctors* (on the far left side is a portrait of Troilo Baglioni, the prior who commissioned the work), and the *Annunciation* (look for Pinturicchio's self-portrait in the Virgin's room). The artist painted them after he had already won great acclaim for his work in the Palazzi Vaticani in Rome for Borgia Pope Alexander VI. Two pillars on either side of the apse are decorated with frescoes by Perugino (circa 1450–1523). ✉ *Piazza Matteotti 18* ☎ 0742/301792 🌐 [www.smariamaggiore.com](http://www.smariamaggiore.com).

## h Hotels

### Hotel Palazzo Bocci

\$\$ | HOTEL | Lovely sitting areas, a reading room, bucolic ceiling and wall frescoes, and a garden terrace all add quiet and elegant charm to this 14th-century building, where several rooms have valley views. **Pros:** central location; splendid views of the valley from public areas and some rooms; abundant breakfasts. **Cons:** noisy in summer months; not all rooms have views; needs a brushup. 💰 Rooms from: €160 ✉ *Via Cavour 17* ☎ 0742/301021 🌐 [www.palazzobocci.com](http://www.palazzobocci.com) ➡ 23 rooms 🍷 Free breakfast.

### La Bastiglia

\$ | HOTEL | Polished wood planks and handwoven rugs have replaced the rustic flooring of a former grain mill, and comfortable sitting rooms and cozy bedrooms are filled with a mix of antique and modern pieces. **Pros:** lovely terrace restaurant; leisure and wellness facilities; fine views from top-floor rooms, some with terraces. **Cons:** some shared balconies; no elevator and plenty of steps, so pack light; mix of modern and antique decor not congenial to all. 💰 Rooms from: €100 ✉ *Piazza Vallegloria* ☎ 0742/651277 🌐 [www.labastiglia.com](http://www.labastiglia.com) 🕒 Closed 3 wks in Jan. ➡ 33 rooms 🍷 Free breakfast.

# Montefalco

*6 km (4 miles) southeast of Bevagna, 34 km (21 miles) south of Assisi.*

Nicknamed the “balcony over Umbria” for its high vantage point over the valley that runs from Perugia to Spoleto, Montefalco began as an important Roman settlement situated on the Via Flaminia. The town owes its current name (“Falcon’s Mount”) to Emperor Frederick II (1194–1250). Obviously a greater fan of falconry than Roman architecture, he destroyed the ancient town, which was then called Coccorone, in 1249, and built in its place what would later become Montefalco. Aside from a few fragments incorporated in a private house just off Borgo Garibaldi, no traces remain of the old Roman center. However, Montefalco has more than its fair share of interesting art and architecture and is well worth the drive up the hill. Montefalco is also a good place to stop for a meal, as is close-by Bevagna: here you need go no farther than the main squares to find a restaurant or bar with a hot meal, and most establishments—both simple and sophisticated—offer a splendid combination of history and small-town hospitality.

## GETTING HERE AND AROUND

If you’re driving from Perugia, take the E45 toward Rome. Take the Foligno exit, then merge onto the SP445 and follow it into Montefalco. The drive takes around 50 minutes. The nearest train station is in Foligno, about 7 km (4½ miles) away. From there you can take a taxi or a bus into Montefalco.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACT** **La Strada del Sagrantino.** ✉ *Piazza del Comune 17* 📞  
0742/378490 🌐 [www.stradadelsagrantino.it](http://www.stradadelsagrantino.it).

## 🍴 Restaurants

### ★ L’Alchimista

§ | UMBRIAN | “The Alchemist” is an apt name, as the chef’s transformations are magical, and everything can be paired with wines from their extensive

selection. Though pasta, veggie, and meat dishes change seasonally, the homemade gnocchi in Sagrantino sauce, always on offer, wins raves from guests, plus all the delicious desserts are made on the premises. **Known for:** extensive wine list; congenial setting and atmosphere; refined but relaxed dining. [💰] *Average main: €14* [✉] *Piazza del Comune 14* [📞] *0742/378558* [🌐] [www.ristorantealchimista.it](http://www.ristorantealchimista.it) [🕒] *Closed Tues., and Feb.*

### ★ Redibis

\$\$ | MODERN ITALIAN | Housed in a Roman theater built in the 1st century AD, but brought up-to-date with mid-century modern furniture and sleek chandeliers, the atmosphere is as unique as the food. The seasonally changing menu, featuring mainly zero kilometer products, aims to adapt ancient ingredients like Roveja wild peas of Colfiorito to sophisticated modern tastes, while offering a fine selection of Umbrian wines. **Known for:** fascinating cavelike atmosphere; focus on local producers; beautifully presented dishes. [💰] *Average main: €22* [✉] *8 km (5 miles) northwest of Montefalco, Via dell' Anfiteatro 3* [📞] *0742/362120* [🌐] [www.ristoraneredibis.it](http://www.ristoraneredibis.it) [🕒] *Closed Tues.*







## h Hotels

### ★ Palazzo Bontadosi Hotel & Spa

\$\$ | HOTEL | This charming boutique hotel set inside an 18th-century palace overlooking the main square includes spacious rooms with original frescoes and beamed ceilings contrasted with modern furnishings. **Pros:** sophisticated design-focused vibe; spa in medieval cellars has a private Turkish bath and whirlpool; friendly service. **Cons:** rooms facing the square can be noisy; limited spa facilities; small breakfast selection. [💰] *Rooms from: €170* [✉] *Piazza del Comune 19* [📞] *0742/379357* [🌐] [www.hotelbontadosi.it](http://www.hotelbontadosi.it) [🛏] *12 rooms* [🕒] *Free breakfast.*

### Villa Pambuffetti

\$\$ | HOTEL | If you want to be pampered in the refined atmosphere of a private villa, this is the spot, with the warmth of a fireplace in the winter, a pool to cool you down in summer, and cozy reading nooks and guest rooms year-round. **Pros:** peaceful gardens; cooking courses offered; excellent dining

room. **Cons:** outside the town center; can get crowded on weekends; slightly dated feel.  Rooms from: €125  Viale della Vittoria 20  0742/379417   
[www.villapambuffetti.it](http://www.villapambuffetti.it)  15 rooms  Free breakfast.

# Spoletto

For most of the year, Spoleto is one more in a pleasant succession of sleepy hill towns, resting regally atop a mountain. But for three weeks every summer the town shifts into high gear for a turn in the international spotlight during the Festival dei Due Mondi (Festival of Two Worlds), an extravaganza of theater, opera, music, painting, and sculpture. As the world's top artists vie for honors, throngs of art aficionados vie for hotel rooms. If you plan to spend the night in Spoleto during the festival, make sure you have confirmed reservations, or you may find yourself scrambling at sunset.

Spoletto has plenty to lure you during the rest of the year as well: the final frescoes of Filippo Lippi, beautiful piazzas and streets with Roman and medieval attractions, and superb natural surroundings with rolling hills and a dramatic gorge. Spoleto makes a good base for exploring all of southern Umbria, as Assisi, Orvieto, and the towns in between are all within easy reach.

## GETTING HERE AND AROUND

Spoletto is an hour's drive from Perugia. From the E45 highway, take the exit toward Assisi and Foligno, then merge onto the SS75 until you reach the Foligno Est exit. Merge onto the SS3, which leads to Spoleto. There are regular trains on the Perugia–Foligno line. From the train station it's a 15-minute uphill walk to the center, so you'll probably want to take a local bus or a taxi.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACT Spoleto tourism office.** ✉ *Largo Ferrer 6, off Corso Mazzini* 📞  
0743/218620 🌐 [www.comunespoletto.gov.it/turismoecultura](http://www.comunespoletto.gov.it/turismoecultura).

## S Sights

The walled city is set on a slanting hillside, with the most interesting sections clustered toward the upper portion. Parking options inside the walls include

Piazza Campello (just below the Rocca) on the southeast end, Via del Trivio to the north, and Piazza San Domenico on the west end. You can also park at Piazza della Vittoria farther north, just outside the walls. There are also several well-marked lots near the train station. If you arrive by train, you can walk 1 km (½ mile) from the station to the entrance to the lower town. Regular bus connections are every 15–30 minutes.

## The Sagrantino Story I

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Sagrantino grapes have been used for the production of red wine for centuries. The wine began centuries ago as Sagrantino *passito*, a semisweet version in which the grapes are left to dry for a period after picking to intensify the sugar content. One theory traces the origin of Sagrantino back to ancient Rome in the works of Pliny the Elder, the author of the *Natural History*, who referred to the Itriola grape that some researchers think may be Sagrantino. Others believe that in medieval times Franciscan friars returned from Asia Minor with the grape. (“Sagrantino” perhaps derives from *sacramenti*, the religious ceremony in which the wine was used.)

The passito is still produced today, and is preferred by some. But the big change in Sagrantino wine production came in the past decades, when Montefalco Sagrantino *secco* (dry) came onto the market. Both passito and secco have a deep ruby-red color that tends toward garnet highlights, with a full body and rich flavor.

For the dry wines, producers not to be missed are Terre di Capitani, Antonelli, Perticaia, and Caprai. Try those labels for the passito as well, in addition to Ruggeri and Scacciadiavoli. Terre di Capitani is complex and has vegetable and mineral tones that join tastes of wild berries, cherries, and chocolate—this winemaker pampers his grapes and it shows. Antonelli is elegant, refined, and rich. Perticaia has a full, rounded taste. Caprai is bold and rich in taste, and has the largest market share, including a high percentage exported to the United States. The Ruggeri passito is one of the best, so don’t be put off by its homespun label.

At La Strada del Sagrantino in Montefalco’s main square, you can pick up a map of the wine route, set up appointments, and book accommodations. Some wineries are small and not equipped to receive visitors. Visit the local enoteche, and ask the sommeliers to guide you to some smaller producers you’ll have difficulty finding elsewhere.

Like most other towns with narrow, winding streets, Spoleto is best explored on foot. Bear in mind that much of the city is on a steep slope, so there are lots of stairs and steep inclines. The well-worn stones can be slippery even when dry; wear rubber-sole shoes for good traction. Several pedestrian walkways cut across Corso Mazzini, which zigzags up the hill, and three escalators connect the main car parks with the upper town. A €9.50 combination ticket purchased at any of the town's museums allows you entry to all the main museums and galleries over seven days.

### **Casa Romana**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE** | Spoleto became a Roman colony in the 3rd century BC, but the best excavated remains date from the 1st century AD. Best preserved among them is the Casa Romana. According to an inscription, it belonged to Vespasia Polla, the mother of Emperor Vespasian (one of the builders of the Colosseum and perhaps better known by the Romans for taxing them to install public toilets, later called “Vespasians”). The rooms, arranged around a large central atrium built over an *impluvium* (rain cistern), are decorated with black-and-white geometric mosaics. ✉ *Palazzo del Municipio, Via Visiale 9* ☎ 0743/40255 🌐 [www.spoletocard.it](http://www.spoletocard.it) 🏠 €3 🕒  
*Closed Tues. Dec.–Oct.*

### ★ **Duomo**

**BUILDING** | The 12th-century Romanesque facade received a Renaissance face-lift with the addition of a loggia in a rosy pink stone, creating a stunning contrast in styles. One of the finest cathedrals in the region is lit by eight rose windows that are especially dazzling in the late afternoon sun. The original floor tiles remain from an earlier church destroyed by Frederick I (circa 1123–90). Above the church's entrance is Bernini's bust of Pope Urban VIII (1568–1644), who had the church redecorated in 17th-century Baroque; fortunately he didn't touch the 15th-century frescoes painted in the apse by Fra Filippo Lippi (circa 1406–69) between 1466 and 1469. These immaculately restored masterpieces—the Annunciation, Nativity, and Dormition—tell the story of the life of the Virgin. The Coronation of the Virgin, adorning the half dome, is the literal and figurative high point. Portraits of Lippi and his assistants are on the right side of the central panel. The Florentine artist-priest, “whose colors expressed God's voice” (the words

inscribed on his tomb), died shortly after completing the work. His tomb, which you can see in the right transept (note the artist's brushes and tools), was designed by his son, Filippino Lippi (circa 1457–1504). ✉ *Piazza del Duomo* 📞 0743/231063.

## La Rocca Alborno

**MILITARY SITE** | Built in the mid-14th century for Cardinal Egidio Alborno, this massive fortress served as a seat for the local pontifical governors, a tangible sign of the restoration of the Church's power in the area when the pope was ruling from Avignon. Several popes spent time here, and one of them, Alexander VI, in 1499 sent his capable teenage daughter Lucrezia Borgia (1480–1519) to serve as governor for three months. The Gubbio-born architect Gattapone (14th century) used the ruins of a Roman acropolis as a foundation and took materials from many Roman-era sites, including the Teatro Romano. La Rocca's plan is long and rectangular, with six towers and two grand courtyards, an upper loggia, and inside some grand reception rooms. In the largest tower, Torre Maestà, you can visit an apartment with some interesting frescoes. The fortress also contains the Museo Nazionale del Ducato, 15 rooms dedicated to the art of the duchy of Spoleto during the Middle Ages. If you phone in advance, you may be able to secure an English-speaking guide. ✉ *Piazza Campello* 📞 0743/224952 🌐 [www.spoletocard.it](http://www.spoletocard.it) 🏠 €8, including the Museo Nazionale del Ducato 🗓️ Closed Mon.

## ★ Ponte delle Torri (*Bridge of the Towers*)

**BRIDGE/TUNNEL** | Standing massive and graceful through the deep gorge that separates Spoleto from Monteluco, this 14th-century bridge is one of Umbria's most photographed monuments, and justifiably so. Built over the foundations of a Roman-era aqueduct, it soars 262 feet above the forested gorge—higher than the dome of St. Peter's in Rome. Sweeping views over the valley and a pleasant sense of vertigo make a walk across the bridge a must, particularly on a starry night. ✉ *Via del Ponte*.

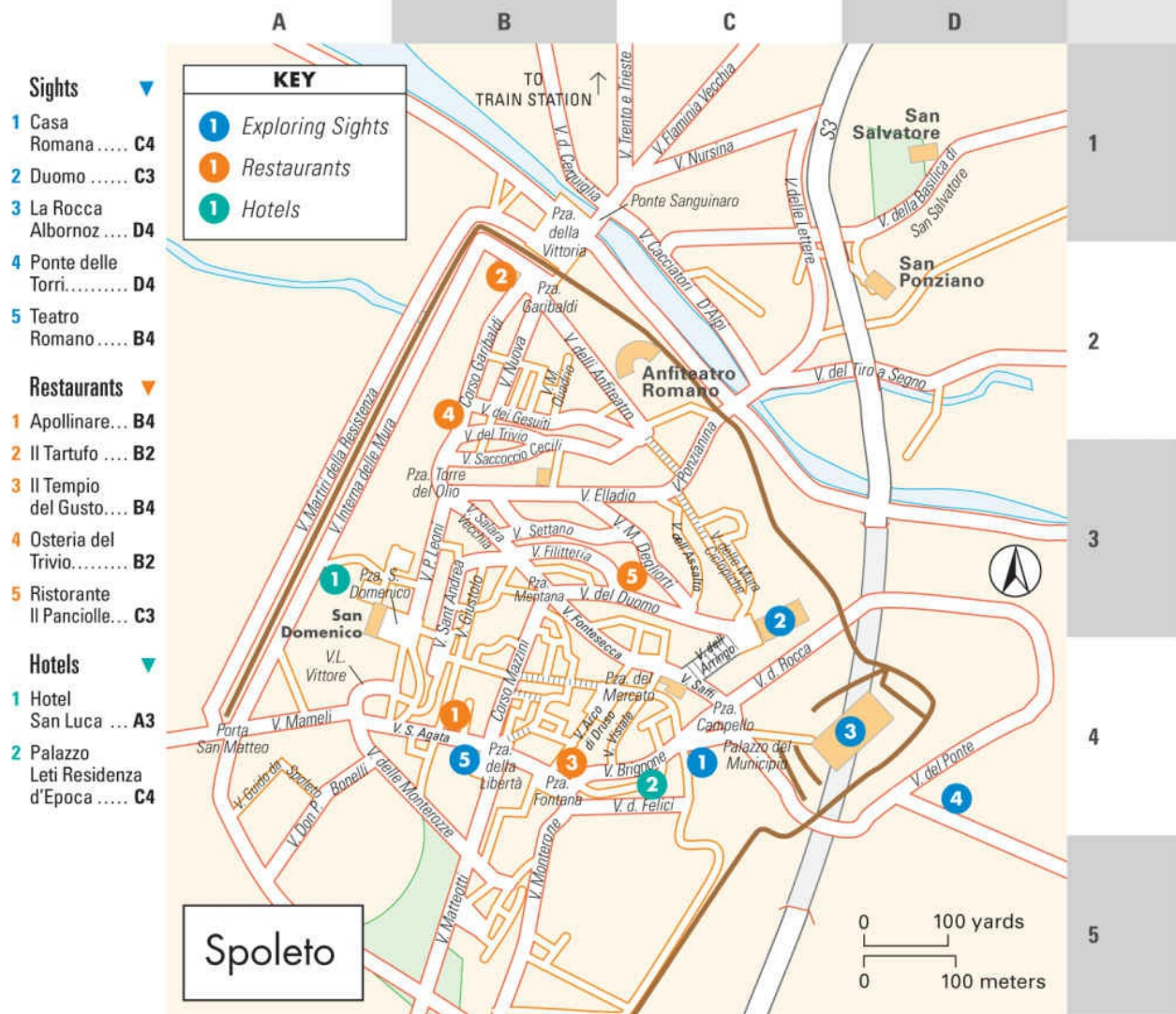
## Teatro Romano

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE** | The Romans who colonized the city in 241 BC constructed this small theater in the 1st century AD; for centuries afterward it was used as a quarry for building materials. The most intact portion is the



hallway that passes under the *cavea* (stands). The rest was heavily restored in the early 1950s and serves as a venue for Spoleto's Festival dei Due Mondi. The theater was the site of a gruesome episode in Spoleto's history: during the medieval struggle between Guelph (papal) and Ghibelline (imperial) forces, Spoleto took the side of the Holy Roman Emperor. Afterward, 400 Guelph supporters were massacred in the theater, their bodies burned in an enormous pyre. In the end, the Guelphs were triumphant, and Spoleto was incorporated into the states of the Church in 1354. Through a door in the west portico of the adjoining building is the **Museo Archeologico**, with assorted artifacts found in excavations primarily around Spoleto and Norcia. The collection contains Bronze Age and Iron Age artifacts from Umbrian and pre-Roman eras. The highlight is the stone tablet inscribed on both sides with the Lex Spoletina (Spoleto Law). Dating from 315 BC, this legal document prohibited the desecration of the woods on the slopes of nearby Monteluco.

✉ *Piazza della Libertà* ☎ 0743/223277 🌐 [www.spoletocard.it](http://www.spoletocard.it) 🏠 €4.



## r Restaurants

### ★ Apollinare

\$\$ | UMBRIAN | Low wooden ceilings and flickering candlelight make this monastery from the 10th and 11th centuries Spoleto's most romantic spot; in warm weather you can dine under a canopy on the piazza across from the archaeological museum. The kitchen serves sophisticated, innovative variations on local dishes, including long, slender strengozzi with such toppings as cherry tomatoes, mint, and a touch of red pepper, or (in season)

of porcini mushrooms or truffles. **Known for:** modern versions of traditional Umbrian dishes; intimate and elegant setting; impeccable service. [💰] *Average main: €16* ✉ *Via Sant'Agata 14* ☎ *0743/223256* 🌐 [www.ristoranteapollinare.it](http://www.ristoranteapollinare.it) ☹ *Closed Tues.*

## Il Tartufo

\$\$ | UMBRIAN | As the name indicates, dishes prepared with truffles are the specialty here—don't miss the risotto al tartufo. Incorporating the ruins of a Roman villa, the surroundings are rustic on the ground floor and more modern upstairs; in summer, tables appear outdoors and the traditional fare is spiced up to appeal to the cosmopolitan crowd attending (or performing in) the Festival dei Due Mondi. **Known for:** recipes incorporating truffles; charming staff; abundant portions, well presented. [💰] *Average main: €18* ✉ *Piazza Garibaldi 24* ☎ *0743/40236* 🌐 [www.ristoranteiltartufo.it](http://www.ristoranteiltartufo.it) ☹ *Closed Mon., and early Jan.–early Feb. No dinner Sun.*

## Il Tempio del Gusto

\$ | UMBRIAN | In charming shabby-chic environs, this welcoming eatery near the Arco di Druso (ancient Roman arch) serves up Italian with a subtle twist. Along with an extensive selection of thoughtfully chosen Umbrian wines, you'll find lots of veggie options, mounds of truffles in season, and, to finish things off, a superlative version of Spoleto sponge cake. **Known for:** flavorful Umbrian cuisine; friendly atmosphere; quaint setting. [💰] *Average main: €14* ✉ *Via Arco di Druso 11* ☎ *0743/47121* 🌐 [www.iltempiodelgusto.com](http://www.iltempiodelgusto.com) ☹ *Closed Thurs.*

## Ristorante Il Panciolle

\$ | UMBRIAN | A small garden filled with lemon trees in the heart of Spoleto's medieval quarter provides one of the most appealing settings you could wish for. Dishes change throughout the year, and may include pastas served with asparagus or mushrooms, as well as grilled meats; more expensive dishes prepared with fresh truffles are also available in season. **Known for:** authentic local cuisine; affable staff; panoramic terrace. [💰] *Average main: €14* ✉ *Via Duomo 3/5* ☎ *0743/45677* 🌐 [www.ilpanciolle.it](http://www.ilpanciolle.it) ☹ *Closed Wed. Sept.–Mar.*

## h Hotels

### ★ Hotel San Luca

\$ | HOTEL | Hand-painted friezes decorate the walls of the spacious guest rooms, and elegant comfort is the grace note throughout—you can sip afternoon tea in oversize armchairs by the fireplace, or take a walk in the sweet-smelling rose garden. **Pros:** very helpful staff; spacious rooms; close to escalators for exploring city. **Cons:** outside the town center; no restaurant; can feel soulless in winter. [💰] Rooms from: €100 [✉] Via Interna delle Mura 21 [📞] 0743/223399 [🌐] [www.hotelsanluca.com](http://www.hotelsanluca.com) [↔] 35 rooms [🍳] Free breakfast.

### ★ Palazzo Leti Residenza d'Epoca

\$ | HOTEL | Fabulously landscaped gardens, complete with fountains and sculptures, along with panoramic views provide a grand entrance to this late 13th-century residence turned charming hotel high up in Spoleto's old town. **Pros:** feels like a private hideaway; unbeatable views; friendly owners happy to help. **Cons:** reaching on-site parking can be tricky; often booked far in advance; few amenities (no restaurant, gym, or spa). [💰] Rooms from: €120 [✉] Via degli Eremiti 10 [📞] 0743/224930 [🌐] [www.palazzoleti.com](http://www.palazzoleti.com) [↔] 12 rooms [🍳] Free breakfast.

## p Performing Arts

### ★ Festival dei Due Mondi (*Festival of Two Worlds*)

ARTS FESTIVALS | In 1958, composer Gian Carlo Menotti chose Spoleto for the first Festival dei Due Mondi, a gathering of artists, performers, and musicians intending to bring together the “new” and “old” worlds of America and Europe. (The famed, corresponding festival in Charleston, South Carolina is no longer connected to this festival.) The annual event, held in late June and early July, is one of the most important cultural happenings in Europe, attracting big names in all branches of the arts, particularly music, opera, and theater. [✉] Piazza del Comune 1 [📞] 0743/221689 [🌐] [www.festivaldispoleto.com](http://www.festivaldispoleto.com).

# Todi

*34 km (22 miles) south of Perugia, 34 km (22 miles) northeast of Orvieto.*

As you stand on Piazza del Popolo, looking out onto the Tiber Valley below, it's easy to see why Todi is often described as Umbria's prettiest hill town. Legend has it that the town was founded by the Umbri, who followed an eagle who had stolen a tablecloth. They liked this lofty perch so much that they settled here for good. The eagle is now perched on the insignia of the medieval palaces in the main piazza.

## GETTING HERE AND AROUND

Todi is best reached by car, as the town's two train stations are way down the hill and connected to the center by infrequent bus service. From Perugia, follow the E45 toward Rome. Take the Todi/Orvieto exit, then follow the SS79bis into Todi. The drive takes around 40 minutes.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACT Todi tourism office.** ✉ Piazza del Popolo 29–30 ☎  
075/8945416 🌐 [www.visitodi.eu](http://www.visitodi.eu)

## S Sights

### Duomo

**RELIGIOUS SITE** | One end of the Piazza del Popolo is dominated by this 12th-century Romanesque-Gothic masterpiece, built over the site of a Roman temple. The simple facade is enlivened by a finely carved rose window. Look up at that window as you step inside and you'll notice its peculiarity: each "petal" of the rose has a cherub's face in the stained glass. Also take a close look at the capitals of the double columns with pilasters: perched between the acanthus leaves are charming medieval sculptures of saints—Peter with his keys, George and the dragon, and so on. You can see the rich brown tones of the wooden choir near the altar, but unless you have binoculars or request

special permission in advance, you can't get close enough to see all the exquisite detail in this Renaissance masterpiece of woodworking (1521–30). The severe, solid mass of the Duomo is mirrored by the Palazzo dei Priori (1595–97) across the way. ✉ *Piazza del Popolo* 📞 075/8943041.

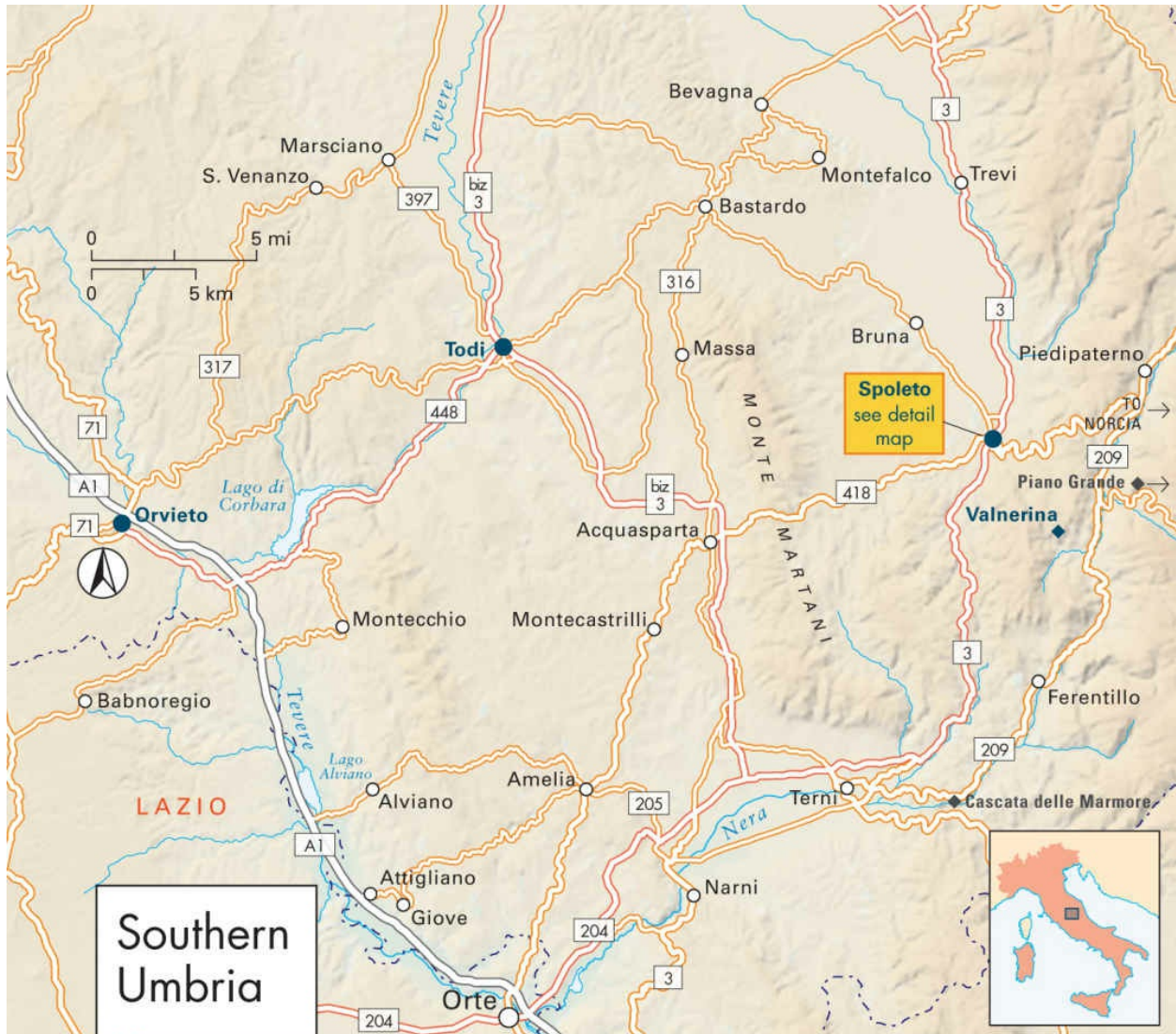
### **Piazza del Popolo**

**PLAZA** | Built above the Roman Forum, Piazza del Popolo is Todi's high point, a model of spatial harmony with stunning views onto the surrounding countryside. In the best medieval tradition, the square was conceived to house both the temporal and the spiritual centers of power. ✉ *Todi*.

## **r Restaurants**

### **Ristorante Umbria**

\$\$ | **UMBRIAN** | Todi's most popular restaurant for more than four decades is reliable for its sturdy country food and the wonderful view from the terrace; because it has only 16 tables outside, make sure you reserve ahead. In winter, try lentil soup, risotto with saffron and porcini mushrooms, or wild boar with polenta; steaks, accompanied by a rich dark-brown wine sauce, are good any time of year. **Known for:** traditional Umbrian dishes; terrific vista from terrace; friendly atmosphere. 💰 *Average main: €15* ✉ *Via San Bonaventura 13* 📞 075/8942737 🌐 [www.ristoranteumbria.it](http://www.ristoranteumbria.it) 🕒 *Closed Tues., and 3–4 wks in Jan. and Feb.*



## h Hotels

### ★ Relais Todini

\$\$\$ | HOTEL | Inside a 14th-century manor house 9 km (6 miles) southeast of Todi, this elegant hotel sits adjacent to working vineyards (don't forget to sample the Todini wines) and features such welcome amenities as a spa, outdoor pool, and gym. **Pros:** quiet location; lots of public spaces to relax in; walking paths around the grounds. **Cons:** decor feels a bit worn; price on the high side; reception not staffed 24/7. 💰 Rooms from: €211 ✉ Frazione Collevalenza ☎ 075/887521 🌐 [www.relaistodini.it](http://www.relaistodini.it) 🕒 Closed weekdays Nov.–Mar. 🚗 12 rooms 🍴 Free breakfast.

## Residenza San Lorenzo Tre

\$ | HOTEL | Filled with antique furniture, paintings, and period knickknacks, 19th-century charm pairs with magnificent views over valleys and hills at this property. **Pros:** old-world atmosphere; excellent central location; spectacular views. **Cons:** few modern amenities; long flight of steps to enter; small, basic bathrooms. 💰 Rooms from: €95 ✉ Via San Lorenzo 3 ☎ 075/8944555 🌐 [www.sanlorenzo3.it](http://www.sanlorenzo3.it) 🕒 Closed Nov.–mid-Apr. ↔ 6 rooms 🍳 Free breakfast.



# Orvieto

*30 km (19 miles) southwest of Todi, 81 km (51 miles) west of Spoleto.*

Carved out of an enormous plateau of volcanic rock high above a green valley, Orvieto has natural defenses that made the high walls seen in many Umbrian towns unnecessary. The Etruscans were the first to settle here, digging a honeycombed network of more than 1,200 wells and storage caves out of the soft stone. The Romans attacked, sacked, and destroyed the city in 283 BC; since then, it has grown up out of the rock into an enchanting maze of alleys and squares. Orvieto was solidly Guelph in the Middle Ages, and for several hundred years popes sought refuge in the city, at times needing protection from their enemies, at times seeking respite from the summer heat of Rome.

When painting his frescoes inside the Duomo, Luca Signorelli asked that part of his contract be paid in Orvietan wine, and he was neither the first nor the last to appreciate the region's popular white. In past times the caves carved underneath the town were used to ferment the Trebbiano grapes used in making Orvieto Classico; now local wine production has moved out to more traditional vineyards, but you can still while away the afternoon in tastings at any number of shops in town.

## **GETTING HERE AND AROUND**

Orvieto is well connected by train to Rome, Florence, and Perugia. It's also adjacent to the A1 autostrada that runs between Florence and Rome. Parking areas in the upper town tend to be crowded. A better idea is to follow the signs for the Porta Orvietana parking lot, then take the funicular that carries people up the hill.

## **VISITOR INFORMATION**

The Carta Orvieto Unica (single ticket) is expensive but a great deal if you want to visit everything. For €20 you get admission to 11 museums and monuments, including the three major sights in town—Cappella di San Brizio (at the Duomo), Museo Etrusco Claudio Faina, and Orvieto Underground—

along with entry to the Torre del Moro, with views of Orvieto, plus a bus and funicular pass.

**CONTACT Orvieto Tourism Office.** ✉ *Piazza del Duomo 24* 📞 0763/341772.

## S Sights

### ★ Duomo

**BUILDING** | Orvieto's stunning cathedral was built to commemorate the Miracle at Bolsena. In 1263 a young priest who questioned the miracle of transubstantiation (in which the Communion bread and wine become the flesh and blood of Christ) was saying Mass at nearby Lago di Bolsena. A wafer he had just blessed suddenly started to drip blood, staining the linen covering the altar. Thirty years later, construction began on a duomo in Orvieto to celebrate the miracle and house the stained altar cloth. Inside, the cathedral is rather vast and empty; the major works are in the transepts. To the left is the **Cappella del Corporale**, where the square linen cloth (corporale) is kept in a golden reliquary that's modeled on the cathedral and inlaid with enamel scenes of the miracle. In the right transept is the **Cappella di San Brizio**, which holds one of Italy's greatest fresco cycles, notable for its influence on Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*, as well as for the extraordinary beauty of the figuration. In these works, a few by Fra Angelico and the majority by Luca Signorelli, the damned fall to hell, demons breathe fire and blood, and Christians are martyred. ✉ *Piazza del Duomo* 📞 0763/342477 🌐 [www.opsm.it](http://www.opsm.it) 🗺️ €4, including *Cappella di San Brizio*.

### Museo Etrusco Claudio Faina

**MUSEUM** | This superb private collection, beautifully arranged and presented, goes far beyond the usual museum offerings of a scattering of local remains. The collection is particularly rich in Greek- and Etruscan-era pottery, from large Attic amphorae (6th–4th century BC) to Attic black- and red-figure pieces to Etruscan *bucchero* (dark-reddish clay) vases. Other interesting pieces in the collection include a 6th-century sarcophagus and a substantial display of Roman-era coins. ✉ *Piazza del Duomo 29* 📞 0763/341216 🌐 [www.museofaina.it](http://www.museofaina.it) 🗺️ €5 🕒 Closed Mon. Nov.–Feb.

## Orvieto Underground

**MUSEUM** | More than just about any other town, Orvieto has grown from its own foundations. The Etruscans, the Romans, and those who followed dug into the tufa (the same soft volcanic rock from which catacombs were made) to create more than 1,000 separate cisterns, caves, secret passages, storage areas, and production areas for wine and olive oil. Much of the tufa removed was used as building blocks for the city that exists today, and some was partly ground into *pozzolana*, which was made into mortar. You can see the labyrinth of dugout chambers beneath the city on the **Orvieto Underground tour**, which runs daily at 11, 12:15, 4, and 5:15 (more frequently at busy periods) from Piazza del Duomo 23. ✉ Orvieto ☎ 0763/340688 🌐 [www.orvietounderground.it](http://www.orvietounderground.it) 🚗 Tours €6.

## Pozzo della Cava

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE** | If you're short on time but want a quick look at the cisterns and caves beneath the city, head for the Pozzo della Cava, an Etruscan well for spring water. ✉ Via della Cava 28 ☎ 0763/342373 🌐 [www.pozzodellacava.it](http://www.pozzodellacava.it) 🚗 €4 🕒 Closed Mon., and mid-Jan.–early Feb.

# r Restaurants

## Le Grotte del Funaro

§ | **UMBRIAN** | Dine inside tufa caves under central Orvieto, where the two windows afford splendid views of the hilly countryside. The traditional Umbrian food is reliably good, with simple grilled meats and vegetables and pizzas—oddly, though, the food is outclassed by an extensive wine list, with top local and Italian labels and quite a few rare vintages. **Known for:** unusual setting; crusty pizzas; good choice of wines. 💰 Average main: €14 ✉ Via Ripa Serancia 41 ☎ 0763/343276 🌐 [www.grottedelfunaro.com](http://www.grottedelfunaro.com) 🕒 Closed Mon., and 10 days in July.

## Ristorante Maurizio

\$\$ | **UMBRIAN** | Off a busy pedestrian street near the Duomo, this welcoming family-owned restaurant has an uber-contemporary look, but is actually housed in a 14th-century medieval building with arched ceilings. The

Martinelli family's own products, including balsamic vinegar, olive oil, and pasta, are used in their robustly flavored dishes, and you can also sample their own well-regarded Montefalco wines. **Known for:** complimentary balsamic vinegar tasting to start; traditional Umbrian dishes; local wines. [💰] *Average main: €16* ✉ *Via del Duomo 78* ☎ *0763/341114, 0763/343212* 🌐 [www.ristorante-maurizio.com](http://www.ristorante-maurizio.com) 🕒 *Closed Tues.*

## h Hotels

### Hotel Palazzo Piccolomini

\$\$ | HOTEL | This 16th-century family palazzo has been beautifully restored, with inviting public spaces and handsome guest quarters where contemporary surroundings are accented with old beams, vaulted ceilings, and other distinctive touches. **Pros:** private parking; efficient staff; good location. **Cons:** underwhelming breakfasts; four-star category not completely justified; some rooms and bathrooms are small. [💰] *Rooms from: €130* ✉ *Piazza Ranieri 36* ☎ *0763/341743* 🌐 [www.palazzopiccolomini.it](http://www.palazzopiccolomini.it) 🏠 *33 rooms* 🍴🌐 *Free breakfast.*

### ★ Locanda Palazzone

\$\$\$ | HOTEL | Spending the night in this 13th-century building just 5 km (3 miles) northwest of Orvieto is like staying in a sophisticated country home, with vineyard views, a private chef, and two-level rooms with modern furnishings. **Pros:** tranquil surroundings; extremely friendly owners and staff; tasty meals served nightly. **Cons:** no à la carte menus; limited public spaces to lounge in; split-level rooms can be difficult for those with mobility issues or young children. [💰] *Rooms from: €225* ✉ *Località Rocca Ripesena 68* ☎ *0763/393614* 🌐 [www.locandapalazzone.it](http://www.locandapalazzone.it) 🏠 *7 rooms* 🍴🌐 *Free breakfast.*

# Valnerina

*The Valnerina is 27 km (17 miles) southeast of Spoleto.*

The Valnerina (the valley of the River Nera, to the southeast of Spoleto) is the most beautiful of central Italy's many well-kept secrets. The twisting roads that serve the rugged landscape are poor, but the drive is well worth the effort for its forgotten medieval villages and dramatic mountain scenery.

## GETTING HERE AND AROUND

You can head into the area from Terni on the S209, or on the SP395bis north of Spoleto, which links the Via Flaminia (S3) with the middle reaches of the Nera Valley through a tunnel.

## S Sights

### Cascata delle Marmore

**BODY OF WATER** | The road east of Terni (SS Valnerina) leads 10 km (6 miles) to the Cascata delle Marmore (Waterfalls of Marmore), which, at 541 feet, are the highest in Europe. A canal was dug by the Romans in the 3rd century BC to prevent flooding in the nearby agricultural plains. Nowadays the waters are often diverted to provide hydroelectric power for Terni, reducing the roaring falls to an unimpressive trickle, so check with the information office at the falls (there's a timetable on their website in English) or with Terni's tourist office before heading here. On summer evenings, when the falls are in full spate, the cascading water is floodlit to striking effect. The falls are usually at their most energetic at midday and at around 4 pm. This is a good place for hiking, except in December and January, when most trails may be closed. ✉ SP79, 10 km (6 miles) east of Terni, Terni ☎ 0744/62982 🌐 [www.marmorefalls.it](http://www.marmorefalls.it) 🚰 €10 🕒 Closed weekdays in Jan.

### Norcia

**TOWN** | The birthplace of St. Benedict, Norcia is best known for its Umbrian pork and truffles. Norcia exports truffles to France and hosts a truffle festival,

the Sagra del Tartufo, every February. The surrounding mountains provide spectacular hiking. ↔42 km (25 miles) east of Spoleto, 67 km (42 miles) northeast of Terni.

### ★ Piano Grande

**VIEWPOINT** | A spectacular mountain plain 25 km (15 miles) to the northeast of the valley, Piano Grande is a hang glider's paradise and a wonderful place for a picnic or to fly a kite. It's also nationally famous for the quality of the lentils grown here, which are a traditional part of every Italian New Year's feast. ✉ Terni.

## Hiking the Umbrian Hills a

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Magnificent scenery makes the heart of Italy excellent walking, hiking, and mountaineering country. In Umbria, the area around Spoleto is particularly good; several pleasant, easy, and well-signed trails begin at the far end of the Ponte alle Torri bridge over Monteluco. From Cannara, an easy half-hour walk leads to the fields of Pian d'Arca, the site of St. Francis's sermon to the birds. For slightly more arduous walks, you can follow the saint's path, uphill from Assisi to the Eremo delle Carceri, and then continue along the trails that crisscross Monte Subasio. At 4,250 feet, the Subasio's treeless summit affords views of Assisi, Perugia, far-off Gubbio, and the distant mountain ranges of Abruzzo.

For even more challenging hiking, the northern reaches of the Valnerina are exceptional; the mountains around Norcia should not be missed. Throughout Umbria and the Marches, you'll find that most recognized walking and hiking trails are marked with the distinctive red-and-white blazes of the Club Alpino Italiano. Tourist offices are a good source for walking and climbing itineraries to suit all ages and levels of ability, while bookstores, *tabacchi* (tobacconists), and *edicole* (newsstands) often have maps and hiking guides that detail the best routes in their area. Depending on the length and location of your walk, it can be important that you have comfortable walking shoes or boots, appropriate attire, and plenty of water to drink.

## Urbino

*75 km (47 miles) north of Gubbio, 116 km (72 miles) northeast of Perugia, 230 km (143 miles) east of Florence.*

Majestic Urbino, atop a steep hill with a skyline of towers and domes, is something of a surprise to come upon. Though quite remote, it was once a center of learning and culture almost without rival in Western Europe. The town looks much as it did in the glory days of the 15th century: a cluster of warm brick and pale stone buildings, all topped with russet-color tile roofs. The focal point is the immense and beautiful Palazzo Ducale.

The city is home to the small but prestigious Università di Urbino—one of the oldest in the world—and the streets are usually filled with students. Urbino is very much a college town, with the usual array of bookshops, bars, and coffeehouses. In summer the Italian student population is replaced by foreigners who come to study Italian language and arts at several prestigious private fine-arts academies.

Urbino's fame rests on the reputation of three of its native sons: Duke Federico da Montefeltro (1422–82), the enlightened warrior-patron who built the Palazzo Ducale; Raffaello Sanzio (1483–1520), or Raphael, one of the most influential painters in history and an embodiment of the spirit of the Renaissance; and the architect Donato Bramante (1444–1514), who translated the philosophy of the Renaissance into buildings of grace and beauty. Unfortunately there's little work by either Bramante or Raphael in the city, but the duke's influence can still be felt strongly.

### **GETTING HERE AND AROUND**

Take the SS3bis from Perugia, and follow the directions for Gubbio and Cesena. Exit at Umbertide and take the SS219, then the SS452, and at Calmazzo, the SS73bis to Urbino.

### **VISITOR INFORMATION**

**CONTACT Urbino Tourism Office.** ✉ *Piazza del Rinascimento 1* 🏠  
0721/69341 🌐 [www.turismo.pesarourbino.it](http://www.turismo.pesarourbino.it).

## S Sights

### Casa Natale di Raffaello (*House of Raphael*)

HOUSE | This is the house in which the painter was born and where he took his first steps in painting, under the direction of his artist father. There's some debate about the fresco of the Madonna here; some say it's by Raphael, whereas others attribute it to the father—with Raphael's mother and the young painter himself standing in as models for the Madonna and Child. ✉ Via Raffaello 57 📞 0722/320105 🌐 [www.casaraffaello.com](http://www.casaraffaello.com) 🏠 €4.

### ★ Palazzo Ducale (*Ducal Palace*)

BUILDING | The Palazzo Ducale holds a place of honor in the city. If the Renaissance was, ideally, a celebration of the nobility of man and his works, of the light and purity of the soul, then there's no place in Italy, the birthplace of the Renaissance, where these tenets are better illustrated. From the moment you enter the peaceful courtyard, you know you're in a place of grace and beauty, the harmony of the building reflecting the high ideals of the time. Today the palace houses the **Galleria Nazionale delle Marche** (National Museum of the Marches), with a superb collection of paintings, sculpture, and other objets d'art. Some works were originally the possessions of the Montefeltro family; others were brought here from churches and palaces throughout the region. Masterworks in the collection include Paolo Uccello's *Profanation of the Host*, Titian's *Resurrection and Last Supper*, and Piero della Francesca's *Madonna of Senigallia*. But the gallery's highlight is Piero's enigmatic work long known as *The Flagellation of Christ*. Much has been written about this painting, and few experts agree on its meaning. Academic debates notwithstanding, the experts agree that the work is one of the painter's masterpieces. ✉ Piazza Duca Federico 📞 0722/322625 🌐 [www.palazzoducaleurbino.it](http://www.palazzoducaleurbino.it) 🏠 €8.

## r Restaurants

### La Fornarina

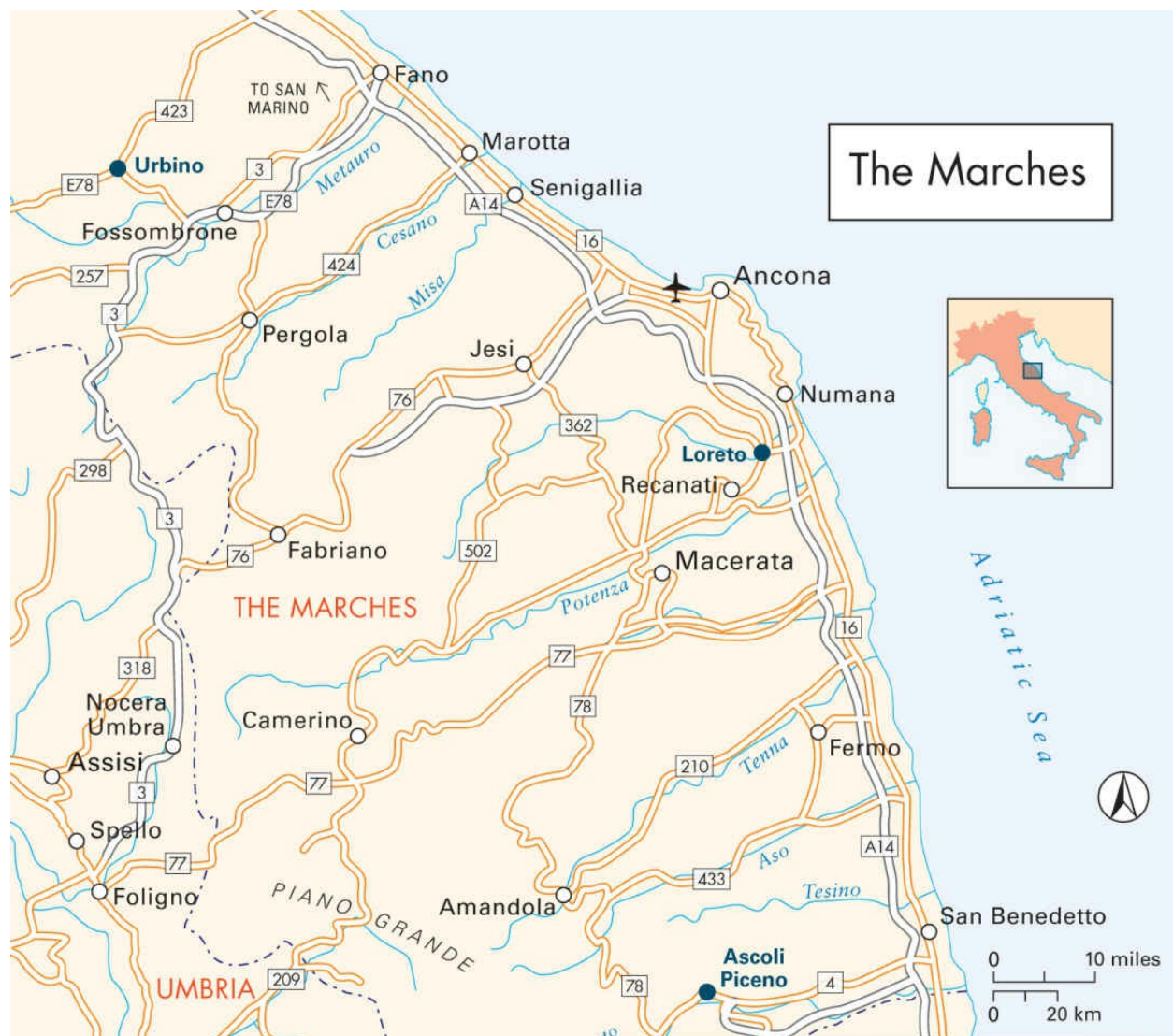
\$\$ | ITALIAN | Locals often crowd this small, two-room trattoria near the



Piazza della Repubblica. The specialty is meaty country fare, such as *coniglio* (rabbit) and *vitello alle noci* (veal cooked with walnuts) or *ai porcini* (with mushrooms); there's also a good selection of pasta dishes. **Known for:** excellent starters; welcoming atmosphere; hospitable staff. [🇺🇸] *Average main:* €18 ✉ *Via Mazzini 14* ☎ *0722/320007*.

### **Osteria Angolo Divino**

\$\$ | ITALIAN | At this informal restaurant in the center of Urbino, tradition reigns supreme: the menu is written in local dialect, flanked by Italian and English translations. Dishes range from the deliciously simple *spaghetti con pane grattugiato* (spaghetti with bread crumbs) to the temptingly rich *filetto al tartufo* (beef fillet with truffles). **Known for:** calm and pleasant ambience; quality cuisine with experimental elements; traditional osteria-style decor. [🇺🇸] *Average main:* €20 ✉ *Via S. Andrea 14* ☎ *0722/327559* 🌐 [www.angolodivino.biz](http://www.angolodivino.biz) ☹ *Closed Wed. No lunch Tues. and Thurs.*



## h Hotels

### Hotel Bonconte

\$\$ | HOTEL | Pleasant rooms just inside the city walls and close to the Palazzo Ducale are decorated with a smattering of antiques, and those in front have views of the valley below Urbino. **Pros:** pleasant views; central but away from the bustle; good breakfast. **Cons:** an uphill walk to town center; some rooms are cramped; traffic noise in some rooms. (\$) Rooms from: €132 ✉ Via delle Mura 28 ☎ 0722/2463 🌐 [www.viphotels.it](http://www.viphotels.it) 🏠 25 rooms 🍴🗺️ Free breakfast.

# Loreto

*31 km (19 miles) south of Ancona, 118 km (73 miles) southeast of Urbino.*

There's a strong Renaissance feel about this hilltop town, which is home to one of the most important religious sites in Europe, the Santuario della Santa Casa (House of the Virgin Mary). Bramante and Sansovino gave the church its Renaissance look, although many other artists helped create its special atmosphere. Today the town revolves around the religious calendar; if you can be here on December 10, you will witness the Feast of the Translation of the Holy House, when huge bonfires are lighted to celebrate the miraculous arrival of the house in 1295.

## GETTING HERE AND AROUND

If you're driving from Perugia, take the SS318 and then the SS76 highway to Fabriano and then on to Chiaravalle, where it merges with the A14 autostrada. The drive takes around 2½ hours. Trains also go to Loreto, but the station is about a mile outside the town center. Regular buses leave from the station to the center.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACT Loreto Tourism Office.** ✉ *Via Solari 3* ☎ *071/970276* 🌐 [www.turismo.marche.it](http://www.turismo.marche.it)

## S Sights

### **Basilica della Santa Casa**

**HOUSE** | Loreto is famous for one of the best-loved shrines in the world, that of the **Santuario della Santa Casa** (House of the Virgin Mary), within the Basilica della Santa Casa. Legend has it that angels moved the house from Nazareth, where the Virgin Mary was living at the time of the Annunciation, to this hilltop in 1295. The reason for this sudden and divinely inspired move was that Nazareth had fallen into the hands of Muslim invaders, whom the

angelic hosts viewed as unsuitable keepers of this important shrine.

The house itself consists of three rough stone walls contained within an elaborate marble tabernacle. Built around this centerpiece is the giant basilica of the Holy House, which dominates the town. Millions of visitors come to the site every year (particularly at Easter and on the December 10 Feast of the Holy House), and the little town of Loreto can become uncomfortably crowded with pilgrims. Many great Italian architects—including Bramante, Antonio da Sangallo the Younger (1483–1546), Giuliano da Sangallo (circa 1445–1516), and Sansovino (1467–1529)—contributed to the design of the basilica. It was begun in the Gothic style in 1468 and continued in Renaissance style through the late Renaissance. ✉ *Piazza della Madonna* ☎ 071/9747155 🌐 [www.santuarioloreto.it](http://www.santuarioloreto.it).

# Ascoli Piceno

88 km (55 miles) south of Loreto, 105 km (65 miles) south of Ancona.

Ascoli Piceno sits in a valley ringed by steep hills and cut by the Tronto River. In Roman times it was one of central Italy's best-known market towns, and today, with almost 52,000 residents, it's a major fruit and olive producer, making it one of the most important towns in the region. Despite growth during the Middle Ages and at other times, the streets in the town center continue to reflect the grid pattern of the ancient Roman city. You'll even find the word *rua*, from the Latin *ruga*, used for "street" instead of the Italian *via*. Now largely closed to traffic, the city center is great to explore on foot.

## GETTING HERE AND AROUND

From Perugia take the SS75 to Foligno, then merge onto the SS3 to Norcia. From here take the SS4 to Ascoli Piceno. There are also trains, but the journey would be quite long, taking you from Perugia to Ancona before changing for Ascoli Piceno.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

**CONTACT Ascoli Piceno Tourism Office.** ✉ Piazza Aringo 7 📞  
0736/253045 🌐 [www.turismo.marche.it](http://www.turismo.marche.it).

## S Sights

### Piazza del Popolo

**PLAZA** | The heart of the town is the majestic Piazza del Popolo, dominated by the Gothic church of **San Francesco** and the **Palazzo del Popolo**, a 13th-century town hall that contains a graceful Renaissance courtyard. The square functions as the living room of the entire city and at dusk each evening is packed with people strolling and exchanging news and gossip—the sweetly antiquated ritual called the *passeggiata*, performed all over the country. ✉  
*Ascoli Piceno.*

# h Hotels

## Hotel Pennile

\$ | HOTEL | This modern, affordable, family-run hotel in a quiet residential area outside the old city center is pleasantly set amid a grove of olive trees.

**Pros:** peaceful; a good budget option; easy parking. **Cons:** distance from town center; no restaurant; basic buffet breakfast. 💰 Rooms from: €99 ✉ Via

G. Spalvieri ☎ 0736/41645 🌐 [www.hotelpennile.it](http://www.hotelpennile.it) 🏠 33 rooms 🍴 Free breakfast.

# EATING AND DRINKING WELL IN UMBRIA AND THE MARCHES

Central Italy is mountainous, and its food is hearty and straightforward, with a stick-to-the-ribs quality that sees hardworking farmers and artisans through a long day's work and helps them make the steep climb home at night.

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In restaurants here, as in much of Italy, you're rewarded for seeking out the local cuisines, and you'll often find better and cheaper food if you're willing to stray a few hundred yards from the main sights. Spoleto is noted for its good food and service, probably a result of high expectations from the international arts crowd. For gourmet food, however, it's hard to beat Spello, which has both excellent restaurants and first-rate wine merchants.

A rule of thumb for eating well throughout Umbria is to order what's in season; stroll through local markets to see what's for sale. A number of restaurants in the region offer *degustazione* (tasting) menus, which give you a chance to try different local specialties without breaking the bank.

## TASTY TRUFFLES

More truffles are found in Umbria than anywhere else in Italy. Spoleto and Norcia are prime territory for the *tartufo nero* (reddish-black interior and fine white veins) prized for its extravagant flavor and intense aroma.

The mild summer truffle, *scorzone estivo* (black outside and beige inside), is in season from May through December. The *scorzone autunnale* (burnt brown color and visible veins inside) is found from October through December.

## OLIVE OIL

Nearly everywhere you look in Umbria, olive trees grace the hillsides. The soil of the Apennines allows the olives to ripen slowly, guaranteeing low acidity, a cardinal virtue of fine oil. Look for restaurants that proudly display their own oil, often a sign that they care about their food.

Umbria's finest oil is found in Trevi, where the local product is intensely green and fruity. You can sample it in the town's wine bars, which often offer olive-oil tastings.

## PORK PRODUCTS

Much of traditional Umbrian cuisine revolves around pork. It can be cooked in wood-fire stoves, sometimes basted with a rich sauce made from innards and red wine. The roasted pork known as *porchetta* is grilled on a spit and flavored with fennel and herbs, leaving a crisp outer sheen.

The art of pork processing has been handed down through generations in Norcia, so much so that charcuterie producers throughout Italy are often known as *norcini*. Don't miss *prosciutto di Norcia*, which is aged for two years.

### LENTILS AND SOUPS

The town of Castelluccio di Norcia is particularly known for its lentils and its farro (an ancient grain used by the Romans, similar to wheat), and a variety of beans used in soups. Throughout Umbria, look for *imbrecciata*, a soup of beans and grains, delicately flavored with local herbs. Other ingredients that find their way into thick Umbrian soups are wild beet, sorrel, mushrooms, spelt, chickpeas, and the elusive, fragrant saffron, grown in nearby Cascia.

### WINE

Sagrantino grapes are the star in Umbria's most notable red wines. For centuries they've been used in Sagrantino *passito*, a semisweet wine made by leaving the grapes to dry for a period after picking in order to intensify their sugar content. In recent decades, Montefalco Sagrantino *secco* (dry) has occupied the front stage. Both *passito* and *secco* have a deep red-ruby color, with a full body and rich flavor.

The abundance of *enotecas* (wineshops and wine bars) has made it easier to arrange wine tastings. Many also let you sample different olive oils on toasted bread, known as *bruschetta*. Some wine information centers, such as La Strada del Sagrantino in the town of Montefalco, will help set up appointments for tastings.



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## **About Our Writers**

**Liz Humphreys** is a transplant to Europe from New York City, where she spent more than a decade in editorial positions for media companies including Condé Nast and Time Inc. Since then she's written and edited for publications including *Time Out International*, Forbes Travel Guide, and Rough Guides. Liz has an advanced certificate in wine studies from WSET (Wine & Spirit Education Trust), which comes in handy when exploring her beloved Italian wine regions. Liz updated Umbria and the Marches for this edition.

**Patricia Rucidlo** is a licensed tour guide in Florence and lives in the Tuscan countryside. She has master's degrees in Italian Renaissance history and art history. When she's not extolling the virtues of a Raphael masterpiece or angrily defending the Medici, she's at home puttering in her always-overgrown garden. For this edition, she updated the following chapters: Florence; Pisa, Lucca, and Northwest Tuscany; Chianti, Siena, and Central Italy; and Arezzo, Cortona, and Eastern Tuscany as well as Travel Smart.

**Liz Shemaria** is an Italy-based journalist and third-generation Northern Californian who has trekked solo in the Himalayas, interviewed artists in military-ruled Burma, and once rode an overnight train across Egypt on her birthday. She has contributed to more than a dozen travel and news publications including Fodor's guidebooks, AFAR, BBC Travel, and Roads & Kingdoms. Spontaneous dance parties are essential to her creative process. Liz updated parts of the Experience chapter for this edition.