

FLORENCE

Basic Information

Documents Required: United States citizens need a passport for visits not exceeding three months

American Consulate: 28 Lugarno Vespucci; 55/ 239-8276.

Currency: The monetary unit is the lira (L or Lit).

Banks: Banks are open Monday to Friday 8:30A.M.Ð1:30P.M. and 3Ð4P.M., and closed on weekends and national holidays. YouÕll need your passport when cashing travelers checks.

Customs: Visitors may export up to one million lire worth of goods (about \$650). The export of antiques and modern art objects is restricted; special permits are available from the Export Department of the Italian Ministry of Education (Ministero Beniculturalie Ambientali, 27 Via Del Collegio Romano, Rome; 011-39/ 6-6723).

Climate:

Daytime temperatures range from a brisk average of 42 degrees in December, January, and February to a humid 77 degrees in late July and August. It rains throughout the year, but rarely for prolonged periods in summer. January is the wettest month.

Tipping: When service is not included on the bill, leave 15 percent. If service is included, an additional five percent is usually added.

Tourist Information: Italian Government Travel Office, 630 Fifth Ave., Suite 1565, New York, NY 10111; 212/245-4822. The main tourist office in Florence is at Via Manzoni 16; 55/ 247-814.

Airports: For European and domestic flights, the main airport is Pisa. Perètola, which is only 10 minutes from Florence, accomodates only short-haul European flights. Passengers outside Europe will have to transfer or fly direct to Milan or Rome. Hourly trains take two hours from Rome to Florence.

Getting Around:

By bus: City and intercity buses are inexpensive and efficient. A *biglietto semplice* (one-way ticket) or *biglietto multiplo* (book of 11 tickets) must be purchased in advance from bars or tobacconists. Buses accepting exact change only are labeled with a hand holding a coin.

By rail: Florence Central station at Santa Maria Novella is one of the busiest in central Italy. Trains are classified as follows:

Inter-City (IC): For major Italian cities.

Pendolino: First-class-only, and faster than ICs.

Euro City: For major Italian cities and Europe.

Espresso: Long-distance express to major stations; first - and second-class.

Diretto: Most stations; both classes.

Locale: Second-class only, stopping at all stations.

By taxi: You'll be lucky to find one anywhere, although there are taxi stands in many of the main squares. Taxis are expensive, so Florentines don't tip unless the driver is particularly helpful.

By car: Major international car rental companies have branches at the airports.

By foot: Florence is small enough to be seen on foot, and has traffic-free zones (*zone pedonale*) in parts of the city center.

Postal and Telephone Service: Mailboxes are red and labeled *Poste* or *Lettere*. To call Florence from the United States, dial 011-39, the city code (Florence is 55), and the local number.

Public Holidays: January 1, Easter Monday, Liberation Day (April 25), Labor Day (May 1), Assumption of the Virgin (August 15), All Saints Day (November 1), Conception of the Virgin Mary (December 8), December 25 and 26. Feast days in honor of local patron saints are not official public holidays, but many shops close in Florence on the Feast of St. John the Baptist (June 24).

Electric Current: Sockets are the standard European two-prong type, and carry 220V.

Time Line

Beginnings of the City

400 B.C.

Tuscany is the center of Etruscan civilization.

200 B.C.

Rome absorbs Etruscan civilizations.

570 A.D.

Tuscany is occupied by the Lombards, a Germanic people.

Middle Ages

1096-1099

First crusade opens trade with eastern markets.

1125

Florence takes Fiesole, the city's first conquest in Tuscany.

1215

Rivalry between supporters of the Papacy and supporters of the Holy Roman Emperor.

1338

Florence's population is 90,000.

1348

Black Death kills nearly half the population of Tuscany.

Early Renaissance

1434

The Medici become the leading family of Florence.

1469

Lorenzo de Medici takes charge of the city.

1478

Pazzi Conspiracy: an attempt on the life of Lorenzo, who escapes, although his brother, Giuliano, is stabbed to death.

1492

Death of Lorenzo.

1494

Savonarola gains following by urging the rejection of all worldly possessions. He is burnt at the stake in 1498.

High Renaissance

1500 -1525

Two Medici Popes: Giovanni as Leo X and Giulio as Clement VII.

1555 -1559

Florentine conquest of Siena and its territories.

1610

Galileo discovers the moons of Jupiter.

Occupation and Unification

1799-1814

Napoleonic occupation of Tuscany.

1860

Tuscany becomes part of a united Italy.

Today

1944

German bombs destroy Ponte Santa Trinita and Borgo San Jacopo.

1946

Republic of Italy is formed.

1966

Florence suffers severe flood.

1986

European Community names Florence a 'European Cultural Metropolis.'

Hotels

Excelsior \$\$\$

3 Piazza Ognissanti

55/ 264-201

The old-guard luxurious locale.

Mona Lisa \$\$\$

27 Borgo Pinti

55/ 24 79 751

A reconfigured Renaissance palace, the Neri, built in the 14th century.

Annalena \$\$

34 Via Romana

55/ 22 24 02

A comfortable pensione on the first floor of a 15th-century palace.

Beacci Tornabuoni \$\$

3 Via Tornabuoni
55/ 26 83 77
Breakfast on the roof-top terrace makes it exceptional.

Torre di Bellosguardo \$\$
2 Via Roti Michelozzi
55/ 22 98 145
Set in olive groves with spectacular views of Florence.

Residenza \$
8 Via Tornabuoni
55/ 28 41 97
No frills. Family apartments available.

Restaurants

Enoteca Pinchiorri \$\$\$
87 Via Ghibellina
55/ 24-2777
One the most famous in Europe for both its food and wine cellar.

Cibro \$\$
118 Via de' Macci
55/ 23 41 100
Quintessential Tuscan food.

Cammillo \$\$
57 Borgo S. Jacopo
55/ 21 24 27
Family-run, with wine and oil from the owner's farm.

Latini \$\$
6 Via Palchetti (behind Palazzo Rucellai)
55/ 21 09 16
Appealingly noisy and crowded with an open kitchen and communal tables.

La Loggia \$
1 Piazzale Michelangelo
55/ 23 42 832
Great views and authentic Tuscan creations.

Mossacce \$
55 Via del Proconsolo (between the Duomo and Bargello)
55/ 29 43 61
Cheerful and a good value.

Sites

Remember that churches are not museums, so be sensitive when visiting one. Women should wear a long skirt or trousers, and shoulders should be covered.

Brancacci Chapel

Piazza del Carmine

Masaccio's 15th-century frescoes in the left transept of the Carmelite church are among the most influential works of Western painting.

Duomo

The cathedral (Santa Maria del Fiore), clad in white and green marble, is dominated by Brunelleschi's dome. Dome construction was begun in 1436 and completed in 1461. Those who can manage the more than 400 steps to the top of dome will be rewarded with a panoramic view.

Baptistry

The Baptistry is the oldest building in Florence, built during the 6th century. Ghiberti's bronze doors are an evolutionary moment in sculpture from the Gothic to the Renaissance. The original reliefs have been moved to the Cathedral Museum and replaced by reproductions.

Campanile

Built between 1334 and 1359, according to Giotto's design. Try to make the climb.

Medici Riccardi Palace

Via Cavour

55/ 217-601

Ground-floor windows were designed by Michelangelo. The palace includes the Medici Chapel and Benozzo Gozzoli's *Journey of the Magi* frescoes.

Pitti Palace

Piazza Pitti

An exquisite collection of paintings from the 16th century, including works by Raphael and Titian. The Boboli Gardens, laid out in 1549, are behind the Pitti.

Santa Croce

Piazza Santa Croce

Built in the early 15th century by Brunelleschi. During the period of Savonarola, heretics were burned in the square.

Santa Maria Novella

Piazza Santa Maria Novella

55/ 210-113

Boccaccio described the protagonists of the Decameron here. Masaccio's *Trinity* occupies a portion of the left wall of the nave.

San Miniato Al Monte

off Piazzale Michelangelo

55/ 234-2731

The oldest church in Florence, built in the late 11th century. After the expulsion of the Medici in 1527, the hill was fortified by Michelangelo and used as a key defense post against the army of Charles V.

Piazzale Michelangelo

On the hills of the Oltrarno, with unparalleled views of Florence.

Ponte Vecchio

The bridge dates from 1345. Jewelers have occupied it since 1593, and it was the only bridge spared by the Germans in their August 1944 bombing campaign.

Museums and Culture

San Marco, Fra Angelico Museum

Piazza San Marco

55/ 21 07 41

The convent and cloisters have been adorned with frescoes by Fra Angelico.

Michelangelo Museum (Casa Buonarroti)

70 Via Ghibellina

55/ 24 17 52

Although Michelangelo never lived here, the museum retains the *Madonna della Scala*, The artist's earliest known work, and the *Battle of the Centaurs*, completed while he apprenticed under the Medicis.

Cathedral Museum

9 Piazza Duomo

The original works from the Duomo, baptistry, and campanile, including Michelangelo's *Pietà*.

Accademia (Galleria dell'Accademia)

60 Via Ricasoli

55/ 21 43 75

In 1563, 70 leading Florentine artists founded the first academy of art in Europe. Michelangelo's *David* and his unfinished *Slaves* are main draws.

Uffizi

6 Piazzale degli Uffizi

55/ 21 83 41

The story of the Renaissance is told through masterpieces. Giotto, Duccio, Masaccio, Botticelli, Michelangelo, Titian, and others.

Bargello (Museo Nazionale)

4 Via del Proconsolo

55/ 21 08 01

Many of Florence's sculptural treasures, including Donatello's and Verrocchio's *Davids* and Michelangelo's first large free-standing sculpture, *Bacchus*.

Shopping

Shops are usually open 9A.M.Ð1P.M., and 3:30 P.M.Ð7P.M., Monday to Saturday.

Antiques

Around Via dei Fossi and Via Maggio, Borgognissanti, Borgo San Jacopo, and Via Santo Spirito.
Casa d'Aste Pitti

15 Via Maggio

55/ 28 71 38

Auctions are held in spring and fall.

Artisans and Restorations

Workshops are found on back streets of the Oltrarno.

Clothes

Most of the best-known Italian designers, such as Luisa and Gucci, have outlets on and off the Via Tornabuoni.

Food

Food markets are concentrated at Sant'Ambrogio and San Lorenzo.

Jewelry

Casa dell'Orafo

2 Vicolo Marzio

(no phone)

Settepassi

25 Via Tornabuoni

55/ 21 55 06

Leather

One of Florence's main exports.

Peruzzi

Borgo dei Greci

55/ 26 30 39

Wine

Italy's best are Brunello di Montalcino, Vino Nobile di Montepulciano, Chianti, and the red wine of Carmignano.

Night Spots

Teatro dell'Oriuolo

Via dell'Oriuolo

Native productions, if your Italian is good.

Teatro alla Pergola

12 Via della Pergola

55/ 247-9651

Year-round performances.

Sala Bianca

Palazzo Pitti

Classical music.

Sala del Conservatorio di Musica

2 Piazza Belle Arti

Chamber orchestras and smaller performances.

In the summer, ballet performances take place at Giardino di Boboli and in the Palazzo Pitti.

Excursions

Arezzo

50 miles southeast of Florence

Arezzo was one of the wealthiest cities of the Etruscans, and it is famous for Piero della Francesca's frescoes in the church of San Francesco.

Castellina in Chianti

31 miles south of Florence

One of the original centers of the Chianti Classico wine-growing zone.

Fiesole

5 miles northeast of Florence

The 14th-century church of San Francesco is a rigorous five-minute climb from the west end of Piazza Mino. Once there, you're presented with a magnificent view of Florence and the Arno valley.

Lucca

46 miles west of Florence

Lucca was the only Tuscan city-state to resist Florentine imperialism. The town's narrow medieval streets, palaces, tower houses, and Romanesque churches are still encircled by 16th-century walls.

Pisa

56 miles west of Florence

Pisa enjoyed a vibrant maritime economy during the 12th-century. Galileo dropped three metal balls of different masses from Pisa's leaning tower to disprove Aristotle's theories about the acceleration of falling bodies.

San Gimignano

34 miles southwest of Florence

San Gimignano is the best-preserved medieval town in Tuscany. Thirteen of its original 70 towers, built for defense and as status symbols, survive. Height meant prestige for medieval Tuscan nobility.

Siena

42 miles south of Florence

The Campo is the central square of Siena, and one of the most magnificent public spaces in Europe. The cathedral of Santa Maria dell'Assunta was constructed over a period of nearly two centuries. The Cathedral Museum includes sculptures, paintings, and reliquaries from the Duomo and other Sienese churches, including Duccio's Maestà.

Sunshine Guide to Florence, Italy

SEASONS: Florence has the typical three-season Mediterranean year. Spring (March through mid-May) brings an increase in the intensity of the sunshine and days that are longer than the nights. The landscape is alive with blossoms. Summer (mid-May through the first heavy rains of September) is the season of dry, long, hot, and sunny days. Winter (mid-September through February) is the wettest time of year, with short cloudy days and frequent frosts. Days are not all that cold, however, and crop growth continues. Because of this and the fact that most of the trees are evergreen, there is no "fall" as such.

SUNNIEST MONTHS: July and August. This is when you can expect to get the sunniest weather of the year. In general, 64% of the year's daylight hours will be sunny--from a high of 93% in August, to a low of 47% in December.

For the most part, the sunniest time of day will be from mid-morning to early afternoon. Early mornings are often misty or foggy, and late afternoon tends to be cloudy during the summer months.

WARMEST MONTHS: July and August--no contest. These months are hot to very hot, and the city crowds just make them seem hotter. The hottest temperature of the year will be around 99°, and will probably occur in August.

At this time of year, the temperatures do not fall quickly nor very much after the sun sets. From late May through the middle of September, most nights will be hot enough that you will sleep better with some sort of room-cooling.

COOLEST MONTHS: January and February. At this time of year, you can expect frosty mornings on more than a quarter of the days. Afternoons warm up quickly, however, and most years will not see a day when the temperature fails to rise above freezing at some time. The coldest temperature of the year will be around 20°, and will probably occur in January at a time when the rest of Europe is in the deep-freeze.

Snow flurries will occur on three or four days during the winter, but snow on the ground is rare and does not last.

DRIEST MONTHS: July and August, again. Actually, the entire year is dry by northern European standards. Some 69% of the year's days will get no measurable precipitation; that is, they will get less than a hundredth of an inch. July will have 85% such days, whereas April and October will get only 60%. A "dry day" in the table, however, is one with less than a tenth of an inch--a more useful measure. It takes at least that much to wet the ground under the trees.

Most of the rain comes from the same series of frontal storms that sweep from west to east across the Mediterranean Basin and southern Europe. Weather changes usually come at three-to-five-day intervals--except during the summer. In summer the changes are much less frequent, and the weather is often stable for a week or more at a time.

THINGS TO KNOW: Winter doesn't have the same meaning in Florence as in northern Europe. Since most of the trees are evergreen (including the olive and citrus) there is no general fall of leaves. Some annuals will die back, but others (including wheat and barley) continue to grow and flourish, to be harvested in the spring or early summer. Basically, winter is the season of short, cloudy days and abundant rain. The cold and snow of northern Europe are largely absent here.

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