

FLORENCE

FALL & WINTER GUIDE 2011 – 2012



The best places to eat, sleep and play in Florence this fall and winter

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INTRODUCTION



TripAdvisor, the most trusted source for where to eat, sleep and play in thousands of destinations around the world, has collected the best insider tips from its 50 million monthly visitors to produce a unique series of travel guides. In addition to the best hotels, restaurants and attractions for every type of traveler, you'll get great advice about what to pack, how to get around and where to find the best views. Be sure to check out the guides at www.tripadvisor.com.



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PACKING TIPS

1. "Carry small packets of **Kleenex** for the bathrooms... 'nuff said."—TripAdvisor Member
2. "Wear **comfortable shoes** and bring band-aids. Blisters and sore feet were the order of the day, no matter if we toured two hours or six. Uneven cobbled streets and walking up and down bridges and stairs was very tiring, active lifestyle or not."—TripAdvisor Member
3. If you don't know the language, bring an **Italian phrase book**. "Not everyone speaks English, and people were much more receptive when I spoke to them in Italian."—TripAdvisor Member
4. "Best to bring **clothing you can layer**. It is chilly at night."—TripAdvisor Member, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Inside FLORENCE

Michelangelo's famed statue of David, a huge presence (literally and figuratively) in the Galleria dell'Accademia in Florence, is nearly synonymous with the city itself. And for good reason. Florence is a city of art, and this 17-foot-tall marble sculpture is an undisputed masterpiece. Florence is the "City of Stone," from its sidewalks to its doorjambs, and David elevates stone to an art form. Florence is a serious city—it's the capital of Tuscany with around half a million inhabitants—that's tempered with generosity and charm, and David, for all his strength, has pupils carved in the shape of hearts.

The Mediterranean climate brings hot, humid summers and damp, cold winters. May and April, before the summer crowds and boiling temperatures arrive, can be the most pleasant time to visit. But autumn also makes for a lovely stay.

Visit this Renaissance capital and gaze on inspired artwork, eat divine food, spend your euros in trend-setting shops and simply enjoy a place where the past is truly present.

Top VIEWS



FLORENCE'S BEST VIEWS

"We had some wonderful views of Firenze and the Cathedral from the heights of **Giotto's Bell Tower (Campanile di Giotto)**."—TripAdvisor Member, Irvine, Calif.

Giotto's Bell Tower (Campanile di Giotto), Piazza del Duomo, Historical Center, 055 2302885

Situated on a hill (monte) outside Florence, **San Miniato al Monte** (Basilica di San Miniato al Monte) is one of the finest examples of Tuscan Romanesque architecture. But, forget all that—you'll probably spend most of your time looking away from the building. "Yes, it was a long and hot hike uphill, but the views of the city were indeed amazing."—TripAdvisor Member, Rochester, Minn.

San Miniato al Monte (Basilica di San Miniato al Monte), via del Monte alle Croci, 055 2342731

Erected during Roman times, the **Ponte Vecchio** is the oldest and most photographed bridge in Florence. It is characterized by three arches and is famously lined on both sides with shops. "To stand in the center and look out over the peaceful Arno, you tune out all of the bustle and feel like you are transported back in time. The sky reflects in the Arno as if it is a mirror. It is just an amazing site."—TripAdvisor Member, Brooklyn, N.Y.

Ponte Vecchio, via Por Santa Maria/via Guicciardini

Where to PLAY

TOP 10 Attractions

1. Piazzale Michelangiolo, Viale Michelangelo
2. Statue of David – Galleria dell'Accademia, Via Ricasoli 58 – 60, 055 294883
3. Duomo – Cathedral of Santa Maria dei Fiori, Piazza del Duomo, via della Canonica, 1, 055 2302885
4. San Marco, Piazza San Marco 3, 055 2388608
5. San Miniato al Monte (Basilica di San Miniato al Monte), via del Monte alle Croci, 055 2342731
6. Giotto's Bell Tower (Campanile di Giotto), Piazza del Duomo, Historical Center, 055 2302885
7. Castello del Trebbio, Via Santa Brigida 9, 055 8304900
8. Basilica di Santa Croce, Piazza Santa Croce 16, 055 244619
9. Duomo Museum (Museo dell'Opera del Duomo), Piazza del Duomo 9 via della Canonica, 055 2302885
10. Museo di Palazzo Davanzati, Via Porta Rossa 13, 055 2388610



FAMILIES

Introduce the kids to the city without worrying about speeding Vespas. Closed to motorized traffic, **Via dei Calzaiuoli** is "one of the most interesting streets for shopping," teeming with pedestrians, shops, cafes and historic attractions.—TripAdvisor Member, Italy

Via dei Calzaiuoli

Dating back to 1773, **Gilli** is an indoor and outdoor café on a busy square, making it a perfect spot to quench your thirst and do some people-watching. "The best hot chocolate I had in Florence...expensive, yes, but worth it."—TripAdvisor Member, Philadelphia, Pa.

Gilli, Piazza Della Repubblica, 29, 055 213896

"The **Palazzo Vecchio** has cultural programs for kids. We did a tour of the palace and a fresco painting class, both in English. The palace is beautifully restored and very welcoming. We absolutely loved it!"—TripAdvisor Member, San Francisco, Calif.

Palazzo Vecchio, Piazza della Signoria, 055 2768465



ROMANCE

Take your true love to the **Medici Chapels (Cappelle Medicee)**. It "has got to be the single most beautiful thing in the city, if not the world. Every part of it was designed and built by Michelangelo—sculpture, architecture, decoration. Do not miss this!"—TripAdvisor Member, Jersey City, N.J.

Medici Chapels (Cappelle Medicee), Piazza Madonna degli Aldobrandini, 055 2388602

"For me the **Uffizi Gallery** is the world's greatest art gallery, against which all stand and fall. From the Doni Tondo (Michaelangelo's picture of the holy family) to the world's greatest collections of Botticellis, Raphaels and Titians, this is a gallery without compare."—TripAdvisor Member, Brighton, U.K.

Uffizi Gallery (Galleria degli Uffizi), Piazzale degli Uffizi 6, on the Arno, 055 2388651

"Take a nighttime stroll along the **Arno River**. Very romantic and gorgeous. Dream about your return trip and the things you'll do and see then."—TripAdvisor Member

Arno River, passes through Florence, below Santa Trinita bridge and Ponte Vecchio

Where to **PLAY**



BUDGET

"If you need a little respite from sightseeing, walking and dealing with the kids, take them to the **Parco delle Cascine**, an urban park that features play structures, picnic areas and even a swimming pool."—TripAdvisor Member

Parco delle Cascine, Piazza Vittorio Veneto

A square marking the ancient heart of Florence where intellectuals and artists met in the early years of the 20th century, **Piazza della Repubblica** is "the place to be to meet Italians and have a good time."—TripAdvisor Member, San Francisco, Calif.

Piazza della Repubblica

Get some of the best bargains in town at **Mercato di San Lorenzo**, the largest street market in Florence. "One of the most interesting and fun markets I have ever encountered. An absolute must for leather books, bags and jackets."—TripAdvisor Member, Melbourne, Australia

Mercato di San Lorenzo, Piazza San Lorenzo



ADVENTURE

"I came, I saw, I CRAWLED" to the top of the **Duomo**. "There are 463 spiral steps to the top. It is very tight, and there is only one way up and one way down. By the time you reach the top, you're almost on your knees." Not for "anyone afraid of tight spaces or heights, although the views from the top were magnificent!"—TripAdvisor Member, Castlebar, Ireland

Duomo – Cathedral of Santa Maria dei Fiori, Piazza del Duomo, via della Canonica, 1, 055 2302885

"Drive a vintage Fiat through the hills surrounding Florence with the **500 Touring Club**. We took the wine and olive oil tasting tour. It was a truly unique, fun-filled adventure."—TripAdvisor Member, London, England

500 Touring Club, Via Vinegia 23R, 334 9965836

Circolo Golf Ugolino is "a very nice course to play, with the big added bonus of being surrounded by the beautiful Tuscan hills."—TripAdvisor Member, Charlotte, N.C.

Circolo Golf Ugolino, via Chiantigiana, 3, 055 2301009

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EDUCATIONAL/HISTORICAL

Get a real taste of Florence (pun intended) at **Scuola di Arte Culinaria Cordon Bleu**, a cooking school that focuses on basic and advanced Italian cuisine, breads, wines and olive oils.

Scuola di Arte Culinaria Cordon Bleu, via di Mezzo, 55/R, 055 2345468

"The real jewels are the frescoes."

"Many people come to **Basilica di Santa Croce** to see the tomb monuments placed in the side aisles from the sixteenth century onward, but the real jewels are the early 14th-century frescoes located in four chapels. Don't miss the small museum and the fresco of the tree of life by Andrea di Bonaiuto."—TripAdvisor Member, Florence

Basilica di Santa Croce, Piazza Santa Croce 16, 055 244619

Pitti Palace (Palazzo Pitti) "is a must for anyone interested in art and visiting Florence, and is a great haven for those sick of the lines at the Uffizzi. The collection is wonderful. If you are not an art enthusiast, the Palace also boasts the famous Giardini di Boboli, an expansive and beautiful garden (more like a forest) behind the palace, with great views of the Duomo. You must go!"—TripAdvisor Member, Jersey City, N.J.

Pitti Palace (Palazzo Pitti), Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Piazza Pitti, 1, 055 2388614



RELAXATION

Started in the 16th century by Dominican friars, the **Pharmacy of Santa Maria Novella** is more like a tranquil museum than a perfume shop. "This is a must-see for all lovers of fine eau de colognes, soaps, potpourri, body products, etc. It is a totally gorgeous place to visit—very calm, beautifully displayed products and a wonderful scent in the air. Prices are reasonable, and the sales assistants were excellent."—TripAdvisor Member, England

Pharmacy of Santa Maria Novella, via Delle Scala, 16, 055 216276

Most museums are crowded, and a lack of elbow room is never relaxing. But **Duomo Museum (Museo dell'Opera del Duomo)**—which houses many significant works from the Duomo—is the "best-kept secret in Florence! No lines. Reasonable admission. Easy to locate. Don't tell anyone about this place as we plan to come back and don't want the crowds."—TripAdvisor Member, North Carolina

Duomo Museum (Museo dell'Opera del Duomo), Piazza del Duomo 9, via Della Canonica, 1, 055 2302885

"**Basilica di San Miniato al Monte** is one of the few churches in Florence you can explore in relative solitude. The lack of any light but candlelight adds to the intimate feel."—TripAdvisor Member, Boston, Mass.

Basilica di San Miniato al Monte, Via del Monte alle Croci, 055 2342731

"...best-kept secret in Florence!"

What's the **TOUR**

How to Get Around



"I highly recommend **ArtViva**, a.k.a The Original and Best Walking Tours. We did the 'Highlight of the Uffizi.' The tour was informative and very well organized. And we didn't have to wait in line to go in!"—TripAdvisor Member, Miami, Fla.

Art Viva, The Original and Best Walking Tours, 055 2645033

"Avoid using your car to explore Florence; you will never find a parking place and it's full of one-way streets. For the evening, you can take a **taxi** to reach your restaurant if it is located in a different area than your hotel."—TripAdvisor Member

"Florence is a city **best explored on foot.**"—TripAdvisor Member

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WHERE to eat

FAMILIES

"**I'Brincello** is small and cozy and packed with locals and visitors alike. The staff is friendly and boisterous and create a very fun atmosphere."—TripAdvisor Member, Orange County, Calif.

Osteria I'Brincello, Via Nazionale 110/R, 055 282645

"**I'Toscano** was our favorite restaurant during our trip to Italy. The food was fresh, the menu unique and everyone in our group, ranging in age from 5 to 72, had wonderful meals."—TripAdvisor Member, Naperville, Ill.

I'Toscano, Via Guelfa 70r, 055 215475

"We are a family of very picky eaters and **La Bussola** is one of the best restaurants that we've have ever been to. The menu was simple, complete and easy to order from, and the ingredients could not have been any fresher."—TripAdvisor Member, Clinton, N.J.

La Bussola, Via Porta Rossa 58/R, 055 293 376

ROMANCE

"**Club Culinario** Toscano da Osvaldo set the standard for all our other culinary experiences in the city. The food is well presented and cooked to perfection and the restaurant itself has a quiet romantic feel."—TripAdvisor Member, London, U.K.

Club Culinario Toscano da Osvaldo, Piazza dei Peruzzi 3R, 055 217 919

Pitti Gola is "a romantic, tiny place. In the summer, you can sit outside in front of the Pitti Palace. In the winter, it's gorgeously cozy. They have a wonderful selection of Tuscan wines and a delicious light menu, with fresh pasta and plates of local cheese and salami."—TripAdvisor Member, Florence

Pitti Gola e Cantina, Piazza de'Pitti 16, 055 212704

"**Oliviero** is a very elegant restaurant. Beautiful atmosphere and nice staff. The food is really exquisite. This is not an Italian trattoria, but a more sophisticated restaurant. The food is Italian 'nouvelle cuisine.' I highly recommend it."—TripAdvisor Member, Porto, Portugal

Oliviero, Via delle Terme 51r, 055 212421

BUDGET

Gelateria La Carraia dishes up "excellent ice cream starting from 1 euro. In the rest of the city it's tough to find an ice cream for less than 2 euros."—TripAdvisor Member

Gelateria La Carraia, Piazza N. Sauro, 25/R, 055 280695

Trattoria Cibreo is a "low-cost, no-reservations restaurant. Get there earlier than the Italians (8 or 8:30 P.M., whenever it opens) and you should be fine. Along with delicious soups and entrees (they don't do pasta), they had delicious chocolate and cheesecake desserts."—TripAdvisor Member

Trattoria Cibreo, via Andrea Del Verrocchio, 5/R, 055 2341100

"How can a restaurant stand out selling pizza in Italy? Somehow **Gusta Pizza** does! With food served on cardboard plates, I wasn't full of hope until I tasted my calzone. The flavor was fantastic. With the great value and the convenient location, you'd be hard pressed to better this!"—TripAdvisor Member

Gusta Pizza, Via Maggio 46r, 055 285068

WHERE to eat



HEALTH-CONSCIOUS

“I love art, and if I had to truly choose between seeing Michelangelo’s work and eating at **Ciro & Sons**, the restaurant would win! The best gluten-free pizza anywhere on the planet. I drool whenever I mention it. If only they would share the recipe!”—TripAdvisor Member, Colorado

Ciro & Sons, Via del Giglio 28/R, 055 289694

To enjoy the spoils of an ever-changing menu of veggie delights, visit **Il Vegetariano**. “It reminded me of the vegetarian food I used to get ‘back home’ in the States. If you are looking to go there for a fantastic dining experience, it’s actually sort of a cafeteria.”—TripAdvisor Member, Florence

Il Vegetariano, via delle Ruote, 30/R, 055 475030

Trattoria Za-Za is “a place where locals go. Covered outdoor seating and castle-like interior seating. Serving portions are more than usual. Excellent cooking, friendly servers even when busy. Great for meat lovers and vegetarians alike.”—TripAdvisor Member

Trattoria Za-Za, Piazza del Mercato Central, 26/R, 055 215411

HIDDEN GEMS

“The highlight of our stay was having dinner in **Il Cinghiale Bianco**, a traditional osteria set in a medieval tower near the Ponte Vecchio. We celebrated our wedding anniversary at what the owner described as a ‘molto romantico’ table for two, set on a tiny balcony overlooking the rest of the restaurant, a great place for people-watching.”—TripAdvisor Member, Isle of Man, U.K.

Il Cinghiale Bianco, Borgo Sant’Jacopo, 43/R, 055 215706

“**La Pentola dell’Oro Osteria** serves up excellent twists on traditional Tuscan food. The chef, Giuseppi Alessi, has published a well-known cookbook in Italian. A great downstairs dining room is in a Renaissance-era room.”—TripAdvisor Member

La Pentola dell’Oro Osteria, via di Mezzo, 25/26R, 055 241808

“You won’t find **Trattoria Garga** in guide books! It’s a fun place with great food and entertaining waiters. Definitely the place to see and be seen. The Pasta Magnifico (with orange and mint) is not to be missed, nor is the ‘best cheesecake in the world.’ Cooking classes are also held here if you’re so inclined.”—TripAdvisor Member

Trattoria Garga, via Del Moro, 48/R, 055 2398898

“...a ‘molto romantico’ table for two.”

SPECIAL EVENTS



Get your creative juices flowing with exhibitions, performances, concerts, workshops and more at the **Creativity Festival**. The events pay homage to visionary people and places, past and present. (October)

Creativity Festival, Fortezza da Basso, <http://www.festivaldellacreativita.it>

Immerse yourself in images of people and places during Florence’s international documentary film festival, **Il Festival dei Popoli**. (November 12 – 19)

Festival dei Popoli, Various venues, 055 244778, <http://festivaldeipopoli.org>

Touted as one of the top 20 marathons in the world and offering men’s and women’s events in addition to a “Ginky Run” for kids, the **Florence Marathon** will keep the whole family fit this fall. (November 27)

Florence Marathon, Begins in Piazzale Michelangelo, 055 5522957, <http://www.firenzemarathon.it>

Bring the kids to the home of Babbo Natale (Father Christmas), or simply browse the multicolored street market stands to splurge on chocolate and other gifts during the **Florence Noel** Christmas market. Workshops, food and entertainment abound to wow the whole family. (November 11 – 13)

Florence Noel, Stazione Leopolda, 5R Viale Fratelli Rossellini, 347 4838142, <http://www.florence Noel.it>

Treat your taste buds to the yummiest feast of the year, the **Florence Chocolate Fair**, presenting exclusively artisan chocolate made by Italy’s master chocolatiers. (February)

Florence Chocolate Fair, Piazza Santa Croce, 055 2207209, <http://www.fieradelcioccolato.it>

Different from many of the pre-Lent Carnival celebrations around the world, the **Florence Carnival** promotes international peace and harmony through an experimental format featuring demonstrations and exhibitions that celebrate cultures from all over the globe. (February 6 – 21)

Florence Carnival, From Piazza Ognissanti to Piazza della Signoria

Where to STAY



FAMILIES

Residence Hilda was just about perfect for our family of three. The apartment was spacious, bright, clean and very designer. The sort of place we would want to own in Florence.”—TripAdvisor Member, Nyon, Switzerland

Residence Hilda, Via dei Servi 40, 055 288 021

“I was definitely satisfied with our stay in the little but very comfortable **Hotel Colomba**. The location is wonderful; all the most important sights in Florence are at a walking distance. Lovely restaurants all around. One of the highlights is the kindness and helpfulness of the owners—they really made us feel comfortable.”—TripAdvisor Member, Gallarate, Italy

Hotel Colomba, via Cavour, 21, 055 289139

“I had heard good things about **Hotel Casci** from friends but I never thought we would enjoy our stay as much as we did! Not only were we impressed with the size of the ‘family room’ (one queen and two twin beds), but it was very clean, well kept and a huge bonus to have A/C at no additional charge! We all enjoyed the breakfast, and the kids loved the special treatment of yummy cups of hot chocolate every morning.”—TripAdvisor Member, Seattle, Wash.

Hotel Casci, via Cavour, 13, 055 211686

ROMANCE

Il Salviatino is beautiful, the most romantic spot in Florence. Our room was lovely, and and the staff could not have been more helpful. They made it clear that they were there for us. All we had to do was ask.”—TripAdvisor Member, Santa Barbara, Calif.

Il Salviatino, Via del Salviatino, 21, 055 9041111

“We visited **La Dimora degli Angeli** for our honeymoon. It was perfect in so many ways. The location is central; the room was stunning and spotless. The staff was very friendly and courteous. It was simply divine!”—TripAdvisor Member, Sliema, Malta

La Dimora degli Angeli, Via de Brunelleschi, 4, 055 288478

“We had a fantastic stay at the **Relais Grand Tour**. As soon as we arrived, the owners made us really feel at home. We loved the decor - it was eclectically styled with reclaimed tiles, lots of patterns, beautiful fabrics and prints. The room was spacious and the actual B&B is situated in a lovely old 16th century townhouse.”—TripAdvisor Member, London, U.K.

Relais Grand Tour, Via S. Reparata 21, 055 283 955

BUDGET

Casa Di Barbano is spacious, spotless, elegant. And the owner is warm and welcoming. Add to this the reasonable cost, and you have all the fixings for a most enjoyable home base for exploring one of the most enchanting cities in the world.”—TripAdvisor Member, Ottawa, Ontario

Casa Di Barbano, Via di Barbano n.1, 055 475016

Casa Nuestra is a “hip new B&B/hostel near Campo di Marti station. The hosts were very, very friendly. They gave us a free city map and wrote down what to see, places to eat, how to take the bus into town and walking paths.”—TripAdvisor Member, New York, N.Y.

Casa Nuestra, Viale dei Mille 8, 055 0510587

Hotel Cestelli is “outstanding. We have stayed in many three or four-star hotels we liked less than this very special establishment, which beautifully reflects the cultural and artistic backgrounds of the attentive and genteel proprietors. Meeting this lovely couple not only enhanced our visit to Florence; it stands out as the defining memory of an exquisite trip to Italy.”—TripAdvisor Member, Florida.

Hotel Cestelli, Borgo SS. Apostoli, 25, 055 214213

“...the defining memory of an exquisite trip”

LUXURY

Palazzo Vecchietti is elegant and beautifully restored. Our suite was tastefully appointed with great attention to detail. The bed was comfortable, with quality bedding and a beautiful cashmere blanket. Our rooftop terrace provided stunning views and a comfortable environment to sip a pre- or post-dinner drink.”—TripAdvisor Member, Wellington, New Zealand

Palazzo Vecchietti, Via degli Strozzi 4, 055 2302802

“Staying at **The Golden Tower** was a highlight for us! The staff was especially warm, kind and always helpful, giving us directions and making dinner reservations for us. The complimentary spa is fantastic—the Jacuzzi, showers, saunas, and fluffy robes and slippers. All of it was very soothing and romantic.”—TripAdvisor Member, New York, N.Y.

The Golden Tower, Piazza Strozzi 11r, 055 287860

Experience “a feeling of nobility” at **Palazzo Magnani Feroni**, where “once you push open the front door, you enter a historic palace. We were impressed by our suite with beautiful antique furniture and high curved ceilings. The view from the terrace is a knock-out. This is an unforgettable experience.”—TripAdvisor Member, France

Palazzo Magnani Feroni, Borgo San Frediano 5, 055 2399544

Where to **STAY**



HIDDEN GEMS

Hotel Davanzati is “a rare gem. The location is perfect; the staff, charming, helpful and discreet; the room, stylish and spotless. Verdict: definitely a five star experience—to be repeated!”—TripAdvisor Member, Paris, France

Hotel Davanzati, via Porta Rossa, 5, 055 286666

Residenza Il Villino is a nine-room hotel in a restored late 19th-century building. This “absolute five-star GEM is a quiet refuge from the intense tourist hordes, which you will appreciate come the end of the day.”—TripAdvisor Member, Edinburgh, Scotland

Residenza Il Villino, via della Pergola, 53, 055 2001116

Hotel David, a 19th century mansion on a quiet tree-lined street close to the Duomo is, “a jewel in Florence. This hotel is a find! It had all of the charm, service and comfort that we needed or desired.”—TripAdvisor Member, Exton, Pa.

Hotel David, Viale Michelangelo, 1, 055 6811695



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