

STYLE & DESIGN • SHOPPING

What You Really Want to Buy in Florence



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by Amanda Brooks • February 12, 2018

Photo by Amanda Brooks

Writer and *Traveler* contributor Amanda Brooks shares her favorite shops in the Tuscan city.

I used to write off Florence. Until last spring, I didn't think it offered much beyond the historic museums and a few cozy but rough-around-the-edges restaurants. Then, I ended up there twice in one month for events, and saw an entirely different side of the city with help from a local friend, Fiona Corsini (an artist and descendant of one

discovered reminded me of the Paris I knew in my twenties—an entirely walkable city with charming one-off boutiques and cafés on every block. Sure, there are the Zaras and the Guccis on the main streets, but there are also old-world, one-of-a-kind artisans creating things I haven't seen anywhere else or online—a rarity in this new global world. Here, some of my favorites, organized by neighborhood (and I couldn't resist including a mention of the incredible art class I took while I was there).

In L'Oltrarno

Riccardo Barthel

An ultra-sophisticated showroom for custom kitchens and bathrooms that also stocks new and vintage furniture and Richard Ginori tableware.

Trop Drôle

A tiny hole in the wall shop with the chicest vintage and antique objects, from Chinese ceramics to 1850's rock crystal earrings to a 1980's Givenchy couture blouse (which I bought!). The owner Alessio has incredible personal style, as does his pitbull terrier Carmela. (*Editor's Note: It's such a hole in the wall that there isn't a website and won't pop up if you plug the name into Google Maps. The address is Via Maggio 57R.*)

Il Papiro

The best place to buy marbled paper accessories. There are a few locations, but at the one near Piazza Pitti, you can watch the owner, Giannini, making his signature pieces in the open workroom in the back. I love their labelled notebooks (Christmas Lists, Thank You Notes, Books To Read) and the mom-and-pop feel of the shop.

Locchi

Custom traditional glassware etched with gorgeous botanical motifs. They make anything you can imagine in glass and crystal, from decanters to water glasses to vases, and can engrave them with any style of monogram you like. Their books of initials and monograms are vast and inspiring.

have beautiful things both traditional and new, and the family take great pride in their work. I had my eye on a set of cups with silver figures of horses, pigs, and cows mounted on each one. It's a great place to buy a wedding present.

Photo by Amanda Brooks

Custom glassware at Locchi.

Near the Duomo

Street Doing

The best designer vintage in the city, with Valentino couture, '70s Gucci, and antique silk nightgowns.

Near Piazza della Repubblica

Loretta Caponi

A beautiful old Florentine storefront selling the best nightgowns in the world. Everything from granny chic floral cotton long-sleeve nighties with hand-embroidered smocking to sexy lace-trimmed silk slips. They do handmade and custom table and bed linens as well.

TAF Ricami

All hand-embroidered, hand-finished table and bed linens in rich colors and of incredible quality. Their “naughty” cocktail napkins (think appliqué boobs on display) are a hilarious and a wonderful gift.

Principe

A mini-department store with traditional tailored clothes for men and women. I buy the PJs in both solid colors and prints for myself—they also have great dressing gowns, shirts, ties and boxers for men. Great quality and cut and very reasonably priced.

Luisa Via Roma

If you're looking for designer fashion, this is one of the best multi-brand boutiques around. Upstairs is serious high-fashion (Vetements, Gucci, Aquazurra) while downstairs is more casual (Alexander Wang denim and

SOTF

This futuristic-looking sneaker store has a completely different vibe from the rest of the shops in Florence. They carry colors and styles of classic cool brands like Vans and Nike as well as collaborations (Casbia x Champion was a recent one) and niche labels like Common Projects. Perfect for teenagers.

Courtesy Amanda Brooks
At the Florence Academy of Art.

Near Santa Maria Novella

Il Bussetto

The best place to buy small leather accessories like eyeglass cases and change purses. They make everything in the shop and emboss your monogram while you wait.

Officina Profumo Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella

They have a few international locations now, but it's still the most beautiful pharmacy, open since 1612. Just visiting is a treat in itself.

Bonus Round: The Art Lesson to Book

The Florence Academy of Art

I spent a wonderful afternoon here taking a private lesson in classical realist drawing. It was both exhilarating and exhausting. Tom Richards was my teacher and I couldn't recommend him more. Classes are open to anyone, at any skill level.

For the men's guide to shopping in Florence, check out David Coggins's list [here](#).



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