



FLORENCE EXPLORED

Look beyond the famous sights, says John Brunton, and you'll uncover Florence's real treasures—from forgotten frescoes to traditional *trattorie* and shops.

Florence is a city to return to time and again, as you go beyond the world-famous sights to discover layer upon layer of smaller treasures. Beyond the Uffizi and Pitti Palace lie masterly frescoes in quiet convents, shops selling traditional crafts, and restaurants serving dishes bursting with Tuscan flavours. Be sure to wander off the beaten track—even if you have limited time—and let the city envelop you in its special magic.

Clockwise from above, Brunelleschi's imposing Duomo; Santa Maria Novella; and artisans at work in the Scuola del Cuio.



Director's choice

Maurizio Saccani, Director of the Villa San Michele, introduces special places away from the main tourist routes:

"I always recommend guests to visit Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella (see overleaf), where beautiful fragrances and toiletries are sold in atmospheric surroundings. From there it is just a short stroll to Baroni (Piazza del Mercato Centrale), in the central market, which is bursting with different cheeses from all over Italy and Europe. And be sure to visit the Caffè Rivoire (Piazza della Signoria 5R) for irresistible confectionery. Another excellent address is Bottega del Olio (Piazza del Limbo 2), whose products, including cosmetics, are based on olive oil.

Moving on to fashion, Stefano Bremer (Borgo San Frediano 143) makes hand-crafted shoes in his workshop in the backstreets of the Oltrarno, while Liverano & Liverano (Via dei Fossi 43) is a respected family business of high-quality tailors.

And this is a wonderful city for anyone interested in interior design. Riccardo Barthel's boutique (Via dei Serragli 234R) will ship home anything from hand-decorated ceramics to bath taps and kitchen utensils, while the studio of talented interior designer Anna Cirri (Piazza Frescobaldi 2R) can restyle your home."

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Hour by hour

10.00 Relax on Caffè Rivoire's terrace, overlooking the Piazza della Signoria, with a cup of coffee.

11.00 Visit the Galleria dell'Accademia (Via Ricasoli 60), a museum featuring the finest works of Florence's most famous artist, Michelangelo.

12.00 Parts of the Pitti Palace close at 2pm, so be sure to visit its painting gallery and sumptuous state apartments in the morning.

13.00 Head for Nerbone, one of the many lunch counters in the Mercato Centrale's food hall.

14.00 The minuscule Casa del Vino on adjacent Via dell'Ariento (16R) has a wide choice of Tuscan wines.

Try a glass at the lively bar before buying a bottle.

15.00 Discover La Bottega del Cioccolato, the irresistible boutique and *laboratorio* of Florence's master chocolate maker, Andrea Bianchini (Via dei Macci 50)

16.00 Climb the 414 steps to the top of Giotto's Campanile bell tower for the ultimate view over the city's domed cathedral.

17.00 Wander along the romantic banks of the River Arno.

18.00 Take the scenic "monk's walk" up the back of Villa San Michele for a sunset aperitif at the Piazza Mino café in Fiesole.