

Florence

Day 1 - San Diego (10/6 Mon.) -> Florence (10/7 Tue.)

Day 2 - 10/8 Wednesday

10:00 Cappelle Medicee, Mostra Gian Gastone

14:00 Accademia, Mostra Giovanni da Milano

Day 3 - 10/9 Thursday

10:15 Museo Bargello, Museo del Bargello

16:15 Galleria Uffizi, Mostra Giotto

Interesting Places

- **Mercato Centrale:** Piazza San Lorenzo, Florence, Italy
 Open-air market that has a cast-iron structure dating back to 1874, which offers a variety of food shops catering to local residents and restaurants. Florence's Mercato Centrale is a must-see when you are shopping in the big San Lorenzo open market. It is the way my grandmother shopped in San Francisco in the 1940s. Food of every kind is there from wild game to packaged food from the USA. Candy, cookies, sliced cold cuts, wine, breads, oil, fresh veggies and fruits, and meat from many animals. I will advise you not to squeeze the fruit, but let the vendors select for you. If you travel with children, they may hold back a bit when they see meat before it is butchered and packaged in plastic, but they will soon be as fascinated as adults are. And the tile floors are spic and span clean. At the Mercato Centrale one can buy the fixings to make a picnic lunch to eat on the steps of a nearby building, just as many others do.
 - Mercato Centrale is simply the place where you purchase all of your foodstuffs. It has two floors if I remember correctly and has every kind of food, drink and vegetable that you want, including food stalls where you could grab a quick lunch. I love food and I loved visiting, unfortunately we were staying in a hotel and I couldn't bring anything back except a bottle of limoncello!
- **Cathedral:** Free admission, Entry through left door of façade. Guided tours
 Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday: 10 am - 5 pm, Thu: 10 am - 3,30 pm, Sat: 10 am - 4,45 pm, Sun. and religious holidays: 1,30 - 4,45 pm
- **Dome:** € 6,00, Entry allowed up to 40 minutes before closing.
 Entry at the Porta della Mandorla of the Cathedral (north side), 463 stairs, no lift
 Mon - Fri: 8:30 am - 7 pm, Sat: 8:30 am - 5:40 pm
- Santa Reparata : (archaeological site)
- **The Institute and Museum of the History of Science**
 Among many other fascinating items, the collection includes the telescope used by Galileo as he discovered the satellites of Jupiter: Io, Europa, Ganymede and Callisto. Additionally, under a glass bell, the upright skeleton of one of Galileo's fingers. Some say it is pointing towards the celestial globe. Others maintain that he is greeting his detractors. On December 21st 1614, from the pulpit of the Santa Maria Novella, the Dominican frate Tommaso Caccini accused Galileo of promoting the Copernican system which, he said, went against the words of the Holy Scriptures. Galileo was consequently denounced by Caccini to the Congregation of the Inquisition. At a time when heretics were burned at the stake with no remorse, Galileo muttered his

"eppur si muove" which to this day still echoes in the conscience of Mankind. Through the will and efforts of Pope John Paul II, in 1984 the Catholic Church decided and announced the rehabilitation of Galileo's image. The Museum is undergoing significant restructuring works, due to be finalized in the fall of 2009. However, a large part of the exhibits can be seen. The Museum is within minutes from the Uffizzi. <http://www.imss.fi.it/index.html>.

- **The Vasari Corridor**

In 1565, the court of the Grand Duke Cosimo I de Medici resided at the Palazzo Pitti. The state administration nerve center and hub of political power was in the Palazzo Vecchio, some 400 meters away, across the river Arno. With the marriage of his son Francesco and Johanna of Austria, the grand Duke felt the need for a private route to connect the two palaces. The role of this passage would be dual. Firstly, to protect the Duke and his family from the crowds, uncleanness and bad odors of the city streets (brief, from contact with the vulgus). Secondly, to facilitate their movements at a time when contestation and political turmoil where material threats to be reckoned with. The work was commissioned to Giorgio Vasari and was executed in no more than 5 months. The result is a superb piece of engineering and creative city planning. A 500 meters long corridor, resting on Roman arches, crossing buildings, the Ponte Vecchio and even the church of Santa Felicita in the Oltrarno, where a dense grill allowed the passers to stop and listen to the religious service at will. Besides embodying a very material backbone of Medici power and presence across the city, the corridor also immediately procured enormous international prestige for the Ducal family. The exterior of the corridor can be easily seen and followed from end to end and represents one of the many charms of the historical Florence city centre. Its interior is now an art gallery and can be visited by groups or individuals, by special appointment only. Reservations should be made well in advance at +39 574876100, on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:00 to 16:00 CET.

- **Florence's National Archeological Museum**: Via della Colonna, 36, Tel. +39 055 23575
Monday: 14.00-19.00; Tuesday and Thursday: 8.30-19.00;
Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday: 8.30-14.00

Florence's National Archeological Museum houses one of the world's great collections of Etruscan antiquities – and it also houses a world-class collection of Greek sculpture and ceramics; a choice little collection of Roman sculpture; and a small, but important collection of Egyptian antiquities. Oh, and by the way it also has a 14th century BC Hittite chariot, of which there are not many. You can see virtually everything in a couple of hours, if you keep moving.

One simply cannot begin to understand Florence and the surrounding towns without some grasp of the Etruscan connection. Many modern inhabitants of Tuscany simply do not consider themselves Italian. "Non sono Italiano. Sono Toscano." ("I am not an Italian. I am a Tuscan") is heard not infrequently when somebody asks a local something like, "Say, what do you Italians think about . . .".

The Etruscans are one of history's most wonderful mysteries. It would appear that they popped up in central Italy some time around 1200 BC. They flourished from 800 BC to as late as 100 BC, when they were completely subsumed by the Romans. Nobody is certain where they came from. Herodotus said they came from the East, and recent DNA analysis suggests that that is true. Just a few months ago, believe it or not, DNA testing of Chianina cattle showed that they come from Syria, suggesting that they were brought to Italy by the original Etruscans. During the roughly 700 years they ruled this part of the world, they developed one of the most remarkable civilizations Europe has ever known. They built up major towns, including Arezzo, Siena, Volterra, Perugia, and they might have founded Rome. Of course they also founded what is now called Chiusi, formerly known as Clusium.

The Etruscans traded all over the Mediterranean and beyond. Grosseto was an active Etruscan port for the export of salt. They built superb buildings of which a few astonishing bits and pieces are on display at the sublime Villa Giulia in Rome. They were superb sculptors, and their works in stone, bronze, and terra cotta are full of life and joy. They made wonderful cinerary urns for burying their dead, many of them decorated with elegant reclining portraits of the folks inside – lively, brightly painted images showing people having a remarkably good time. The "**Chimera of Arezzo**", one of the masterpieces of Etruscan sculpture, is in the Florence museum. It is an electrifying snarling lion, with the head of a ram coming out of its ribs and the tail of a serpent. (The serpent was restored sometime after it was dug up in 1553.) Also here is the stunning "Arringatore", or orator. Some of the Etruscans' works in bronze provided the central idea for all the major works of Alberto Giacometti. Some of the Greek and Roman statuary in the museum are truly world-class masterworks, such as the "Idolino" - a young athlete holding out his hand, and a stupendous bronze horse's head. The Etruscans hugely admired the Greeks, and the Archeological Museum in Florence is filled with one of the world's great collections of Greek pottery imported by the Etruscans, and then copied by them. Perhaps the star of this collection is the "François Vase", so-called because it was dug up by a

fellow named François. It is one of the greatest of all "Grecian Urns", cast by Ergotimos and painted and signed by Kleitas in Athens about 570 BC. One of the few things that we know for sure about the Etruscans is that they were famous throughout the ancient world for one remarkable fact: Women were treated as equals. The greatest mystery? We can't read their writing. They used the Greek alphabet, but their language is not part of the Indo-European family, and is still largely undecipherable. Go to this terrific little place and start enjoying and wondering about them as so few others do.

- **Opificio delle Pietre Dure**

Next door to the Accademia and thus sadly neglected. The museum to visit if you like inlaid stones cabinets, tables and other artifacts, and the main restoration laboratory of Italy and some say of the whole world for stone and metal restoration. www.opificiodellepietredure.it

- I heard monks chanting around 5pm at **San Miniato al Monte up above Piazzale Michelangelo** (where you should go to enjoy your desired spectacular views anyway!) - **sunset** there is particularly gorgeous so you shouldn't miss it, at some point in the day anyway.
- Other great churches that I enjoyed were **Santa Croce** and **Santa Maria Novella by the train station**. I was also intrigued by **Orsanmichelle** - which was a former loggia that was turned into a church - it has statues on the outside and a really cool little interior, for something different. And there's always the Duomo and the Baptistry with the doors, etc.
- As a suggestion go to the **Galleria Palatina, in Palazzo Pitti**. Another very nice place to visit is the most ancient pharmacy in the world (founded in 1200).
- **The Antica Officina Profumo of Santa Maria Novella** is very close to the railway station and they still sell the "water of the queen", a perfume created in 1533 for Caterina de' Medici, when she got married with the future Henry the second in France. The same perfume, two centuries later, changed the name, because Giovanni Maria de Feminis brought with him the recipe to [Germany](#); the new name, in honor of the German town which guested him, was Eau de [Cologne](#).
- Fra Angelico murals in the cells of [San Marco](#), the interior of [S.M.Novella](#) and the Davanzati House.
- If you have only one day, make sure you do the following (starting from the train station):
 1. Go to San Lorenzo (Nice Church to see)
 2. Then Accademia (Where David is, worthwhile, make sure to check this!)
 3. Go to Baptistry and Duomo @ piazza San Giovanni (very impressive church and dome)
 4. Walk then to Piazza Repubblica (nice area to have lunch)

5. Walk over to Palazzo Vecchio (make sure you go into the castle, the first of Medici, splendid)
6. Galleria degli Uffizi (the best art gallery, takes a while though)
7. Cross Ponte Vecchio (oldest bridge in town, check out the jewelry)
8. Head down on Guicciardini to Palazzo Dei Pitti (where the second of Medici, even better than the first one) and Bobli Garden!
9. If you have time, hit up Michaelangelo (awesome view of the entire city!)

Inexpensive and genuine: Florence Newspaper guide to the Florence under 25 Euro restaurants

Here is a list of Florence's finest *ristoranti* and *trattorie* for less than 25 Euro. These are places where it is possible to enjoy **genuine Florentine and Tuscan traditions**: with local energy and simple style, these restaurants demonstrate that it is not only what you eat, but the way you eat, that enhances your enjoyment and food-tasting experience. These spots are a way to avoid touristy food spots and to get into the Italian cultural approach to food. **The Menus are only in Italian, which guarantees the authenticity of the food and helps to keep tourists far**: at the table next to yours, they will be speaking Italian...

- **Angiolino** *Via Santo Spirito 36r, tel. 055 239 89 76, Open 12:00-14:30, 19:30-22:30, Closed Mon. 8 Euro* An always lively trattoria that never fails to deliver first class food. Popular with locals, who congregate here in droves on Sundays at lunchtime, when reservations are necessary to avoid sharing tables with other patrons. Although let it be said, that is no bad thing. Foodies will love this place; just don't try telling the chef how something should be cooked. This is a guy who takes pleasure in surprising his diners.

Anita *Via del Parlascio 2r, tel. 055 21 86 98, Open 12:00-14:00, 19:00-24:00, Closed Sun. 6 Euro* The menu, like the restaurant, is simple, small, and typically Tuscan. The offerings are generous, especially the spaghetti al ragu. It's off the beaten tourist track, but well worth seeking out, especially for the charming staff.

Bordino *Via Stracciatella 9r, tel. 055 21 30 48, Open 12:00-14:30, 19:30-22:30, Closed Sun. 7 Euro* This may be one of the best value-for-money lunch venues in the whole of Florence, and it's only a few minutes walk from the Ponte Vecchio in the Oltrarno. You can eat a two-course lunch for just 5 Euro, and drink a quarter liter of house wine for only 3 Euro.

Borgo Antico *Piazza Santo Spirito 6r, tel. 055 21 04 37, Open 12:45-14:30, 19:45-23:00 10 Euro* Salads are so large and tasty that a sort of Zen-like calm and feeling of well-being is likely to accompany your meal. Unfortunately, you may have to elbow your way through a few people just to get a table, but the exercise will be well worth the effort if you succeed. Non-smokers will be pleased with the non-smoking section.

Benvenuto *Via della Mosca 16r, tel. 055 214 83 31, Open 12:00-14:30, 19:00-22:30, Closed Sun. 9 Euro* Charmingly average. An even split of locals and foreigners ensures a cosmopolitan crowd, and the proximity of your table to your neighbors' table ensures cordiality and conversation dropping. Not the place for a secret tryst.

Cantinone *Via Santo Spirito 6r, tel. 055 21 88 98, Open 12:00-14:00, 19:30-22:30, Closed Mon. 12:50 Euro* A cellar that has been delightfully converted into one of the city's best little restaurants. Blink and you'll miss it: you really need to look out for the street-level sign that points the way. Reservations essential.

Enoteca Baldovino *Via San Giuseppe 18r, tel. 055 234 72 20, Open 12:00-24:00 15 Euro* In the shop-like entrance, you'll notice the array of Tuscan Chianti Classico, Super Tuscans and other wines from the region, as well as balsamic vinegars, sun dried tomatoes, salamis and other appetizing produce. Within, you will find a light, airy, faintly Moroccan looking café which opens up onto an outdoor seating area where customers contentedly munch on the dishes of the day, all written on a chalkboard.

L'Antico Noe *Volta di San Piero 6r, tel. 055 234 0 38, Open 12:00-15:00, 19:30-23:30, Closed Sun. 9 Euro* Not everybody's idea of how a restaurant should look, this former butcher's shop is nevertheless home to some of Florence's best food. Reservations essential; pretensions best left at home.

Mario *Via Rosina 2r, tel. 055 21 85 50, Open 12:00-15:30, Closed Sun. 7.50 Euro* It's a bustling and unpretentious lunch spot, where the Colzi family has been keeping crowded tables of Florentine business people happy for 40 years. No frills, but nothing superfluous either. A great place to go for something a bit more authentic.

Nerbone *Mercato Centrale, tel. 055 21 99 49, Open 08:00-14:00, Closed Sun. 4 Euro* This is not your ordinary restaurant. In fact, it's probably the most interesting place you could choose to eat. Located in the Mercato Centrale in San Lorenzo, you pick your fancy from the counter, and take your tray to the small marble-top tables, where you'll more than likely have to squeeze into the next available spot. Otherwise you can stand at the end of the counter. The menu is simple, changes every day, and is a bargain. An absolute must while you're here.

Ruggero *Via Senese 89r, tel. 055 22 05 42, Open 12:00-14:30, 19:30-22:30. Closed Tue, Wed. 17 Euro* Simple, unpretentious, and serving delicious food, Ruggero couldn't be any better if it tried. Nor does it need to. Open on Sunday: a rarity for a Slow Food Restaurant. Bring the family for a super roast rabbit and great company.

Trattoria 4 Leoni *Piazza della Passera – Via Vellutini 1r, tel. 055 21 85 62, Open 12:00-14:30, 19:30-23:00 12 Euro.* In a charming area south of the Arno, somehow so authentically Florentine, is this large, friendly, rustic restaurant offering a wide selection of cold cuts and typically Tuscan cuisine. Anglophobes take heart, the staff doesn't automatically respond in English to your Italian, though of course they're perfectly capable of doing so. Expect to pay around 20 Euro each, (and that will include a carafe of house wine). One area is designated non-smoking. **Check this web site to find out where the location of these restaurants:** <http://www.tuttocittà.it>

Eat and Food

- For lunch, you could go to the **Central Market** and have lunch in or near there - I'm a foodie and a big 'market junkie' and i spent over an hour in the market alone. I then ate lunch at **Da Mario's right across from the market** and it was one of the best dining experiences (combining food, value, and just overall Florentine communal table atmosphere elbow to elbow with friendly strangers type of thing) of my life. But get there early, I think I got there right at noon and not 15-20 min later, it was literally exploding out the front door.
- FLORENCE... We ate at **Trattoria Antellesi**, Via DePanzani 5, (just off Piazza DiMadonna) The food was great, the service very friendly, and the restraurant was full of locals (no tourists) who very very engaging. Their English was about as good as my Italian, but we still managed to have a good time. (from Rick Steves' Forum)
- Also, the siesta is from about 2pm to about 7:30pm EVERYWHERE-- Florence, Pisa, and small towns throughout Tuscany. Coffee and pizza can still be had during siesta in the larger towns, but dinner requires careful planning, especially if traveling to a small town an hour or more from your home base. (from Rick Steves' Forum)
- We have an inexpensive and tasty meal at **il Santo Bevitore** on the other side of the bridge, address: via di S. Spirito 64/66 r
- I thought **Perche No** gelato was flat out AWESOME, and better than **Vivoli**.
- My husband and I recommend, **Il chingle bianco, on Borgo San Iacopo**, for the best wild boar ever. [Yellow Bar](#) on 39r Via del Proconsolo, Firenze, for the best fries and pizza combo! (really). [Nerbone](#) in piazza mercato [San Lorenzo](#) has the best pork sandwich one can have at a market...
[Vivoli](#) for the best ice cream in the world according to locals,,,indeed a treat.
- Restaurants from TripAdvisor:
 - Badiani: Viale dei Mille, 20/R, Florence, Italy
Ranks #9 in Florence of 458 restaurants
Cuisines: Ice Cream
Price range*: \$5-10
Tel: +39-55-578-682
 - Grom: Via del Campanile, Florence, Italy
Ranks #7 in Florence of 458 restaurants
Cuisines: Italian, Ice Cream
 - Buca Mario: Piazza Ottaviani 16r, Florence, Italy
Ranks #2 in Florence of 458 restaurants
Price range*: \$58-292

Tel: 055-214179

- Enoteca Pinchiorri: via Ghibellina, 87, Florence 50122, Italy

Ranks #1 in Florence of 458 restaurants

Cuisines: European, French, Italian

Tel: +39 055 242777

- Golden View Open Bar: Via De' Bardi, 58 Rosso, Florence, Italy

Ranks #5 in Florence of 458 restaurants

Price range*: \$25-100

Special features: Romantic, Local cuisine, Make Reservations

Tel: 39 055 214502

- L'Osteria di Giovanni: 22 Via del Moro, Florence 50123, Italy

Ranks #3 in Florence of 458 restaurants

Price range*: \$25-100

Special features: Local cuisine

Tel: +39 055 284897

- La Giostra: Borgo Pinti 12/r, Florence, Italy

Ranks #10 in Florence of 458 restaurants

Tel: 055-241341

- PizzaMan: Via Carlo del Prete, Florence 50100, Italy

Ranks #22 in Florence of 458 restaurants

Price range*: \$15-20

- Trattoria Marione: via della Spada, Florence 50129, Italy

Ranks #11 in Florence of 458 restaurants

Special features: Local cuisine

Notes: recommendations from the Rick Steves' guide book and the woman at Hotel Maxim.

Trattoria ZaZa: Piazza del Mercato Centrale 26/R, Florence, Italy

Ranks #6 in Florence of 458 restaurants

Tel: 055 215411

- Acqua al 2: via del acqua, Florence 50100, Italy

Ranks #8 in Florence of 458 restaurants

Cuisines: Italian, International

Tel: 055.284170

URL: <http://www.acquaal2.it/>

Notes: - try the Assaggio di Primi (their signature dish which is a sampler of five pastas from the first course list, Chefs choice.).

Famous for their Balsamic and Blueberry steaks. A person share the pastas (as they recommend) and only split one steak.

Shopping

- **Morning:** The morning is the best time to wander round the markets and flea markets looking for those unique items and best bargains. In Florence there are many markets to look round: the one in [San Lorenzo](#) is famous for its food delicatessens, then there is the **Mercato delle Pulci**, that is held every day in Piazza dei Ciompi with its antique stalls and the Cascine market in viale Lincoln. Take a quick look at the [Officina Profumo Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella](#), the old pharmacy where you can be essences and beauty products and at Bojola in via dei Rondinelli n° 25r, an old crafts shop opened in 1892 you can buy leather goods such as bags, suitcases and wallets.
- **Afternoon:** Your afternoon will be dedicated to a trip outside the city, for shopping, Around Florence there are many famous-label outlets. The most important is **The Mall** by Leccio Reggello (Via Artina n° 63, tel. 055 8657775), that can easily be reached by car, train or by Shuttle Bus from Florence (for bookings tel. +39 055 8657775). There is a wide choice here of clothes and accessories from past seasons by Armani, Gucci, Sergio Rossi, Bottega Veneta, Prada, Ferragamo, Roberto Cavalli and many other labels, at reduced prices.
- **Ponte Vecchio:** If you're looking to buy jewelry on the Ponte Vecchio, be wary of the prices of some of the stores (e.g., The Golden River? View?) - they can be very overpriced. If you like silver, **Petruzzi** at the end of the bridge was recommended to me by my friend - it's a family business and Mr.Petruzzi was the nicest man. Don't forget to bargain at these stores and at the stalls in the Centrale Market - I got most things 20% cheaper than what was quoted.
- **Silver Jewelry:** Not best prices, but definitely worth a visit for best quality are Buccellati (Ponte vecchio), Spinelli (Via Gordigiani near the train station) Brandimarte (Viale Ariosto near [Porta Romana](#)) and Tozzi ([Ponte Vecchio](#) - especially old silver). Most of them have some sort of websites. Have a look and see whether the taste suits you.
- For jewelry: [The Ponte Vecchio](#) is nice for window shopping, but if you want any kind of deal, shop in stores a few blocks away from the area. You'll find a number of mom and pop shops that create one-of-a-kind jewelry with 18K gold.
- There are lots of jewellery shops on the [Ponte Vecchio](#); you could compare prices there with those in more ordinary jewellers elsewhere in the city. I looked at Cameos which started at about 85 euros for tiny gold earrings and 50 for silver on the Ponte Vecchio, but didn't buy anything. On Via Proconsolo, Ornamenta had nice silver jewellery starting at about 20 euros.
For bags, try the Mercato Nuovo, between the Ponte Vecchio and the Plaza del Duomo, (but make sure that what you are buying is leather), or walk around the ancient streets by the Duomo and check

out places such as Adam's Leather Factory for some nice bags. If you look around, there are some good quality leather bags to be had, starting at 50 euros +

Around the main shopping area by Piazza della Republica there are shops such as Zara and the department stores Coin and La Rignascente, (excuse spelling!)

I didn't look at shoes much - couldn't face the attention attracted from shop assistants invoked by trying them on! Remember that you will need to know your continental shoe size and that you may find yourself going up a size or two. Spanish and Italian shoes are often slightly narrower and/or smaller than UK sizes, and you may find the same is true for US fittings. For example, I am a 38, (European sizing), a 5, (UK sizing), and somewhere between a 7 and 7 and a half in US shoes, (which is why I can never find any US made shoes that fit me!!)

- In the center of the town you can find thousands of shops. in particular is via Tornabuoni, via della Vigna Nuova and Via Strozzi you can find the top brands like Gucci, Luis Vuitton, Prada, Cartier etc. On Via dei Tornabuoni 14R, you will find the Salvatore Ferragamo store and Shoe Museum. Shop for beautiful shoes, handbags, ties, accessories and clothing that are of impeccable quality, and stand the test of time. The employees are amazing and can fit you into a pair of shoes without even measuring! The museum is free and is located on the second floor.

In the same area, from Piazza Duomo to Ponte Vecchio you can find many shops of the most important brand famous in the world, including some particular shops typical of the region (even if they are slowly disappearing).

In the area around the San Lorenzo church, you can find many of leather markets (bargain is mandatory)

On the Ponte Vecchio you can find plenty of jewelry, offering many kinds of precious stones at reasonable prices.

If you are looking for antiques, in the south side of Florence, in via Maggi, you will find many small shops; some sell very important pieces of antiques, in other areas you may find reasonable prices.

- **Leather Goods:** I purchased a leather jacket which I love and was glad I did back in March 2007 from Bottega Fiorentina (Borgo dei Greci 5/r, Firenze, tel #3955295411). The jacket costs 350 euros, and the owner included a leather wallet as well. If I were to purchase a jacket in the US with the same quality, made in Florence, it would have cost me twice as much IMO. I wasn't looking for purses or women's shoes so I can't say if they carried them or if they were any good.

This list contains my favorite shops and/or shopping experiences in Florence - it will also give you tips on transportation, bargaining, etc.

1. The Mall <http://www.outlet-firenze.com/>

The Mall is one of the best outlets outside of Florence - it's approximately 45 minutes outside of Florence in a town called Leccio. This is truly an outlet mall where you have last seasons' fashions and accessories at 40% (or more) less than retail stores. There are also classic pieces that can be found at the stores. The stores include: Gucci, Tod's, Armani, AX Jeans, Ferragamo, Fendi, Burberry, Balenciaga, etc. I love Tods and Gucci - just to give you an idea, a pair of Tods' loafers are 130-Euros while Tods purses are around 400-500 Euros.

To get there, you can choose one of 4 options:

- (1) Caftours.com provides a shopping tour on certain days that will take you to the Prada outlet in Montevarchi and the Mall (cost: 21-Euro pp)
- (2) SITA bus from the main bus station in Florence provides scheduled times to/from the Mall (cost: 4-Euro pp each way)
- (3) Special bus ordered from the Mall's management by emailing them at info@design-management.it (cost: 25-Euros pp, minimum 2 pp)
- (4) take train to Rignano Sull' Arno and then, a taxi to the Mall (cost: 4-Euros for the train pp, plus 10-Euros taxi). The least recommended option is the train because I didn't see any taxis that would take you to the Mall.

If you love to shop, this is a MUST because I always find great stuff here. But you have to love designer gear and don't mind spending designer prices minus the 40-50% off retail prices.

2. Gherardi E Ghilardi Jewelers

On the Ponte Vecchio near the Duomo side of the river, there is a jewelry store that specialises mostly in gold. Although the storefront seems quite modest compared to the other stores, the pieces are good quality and reasonable in price. As a result, the owner will not really bargain with you. However, on our previous visit, we bought a few pieces from him and were able to get him to provide us a small discount. If you live outside the EU, you can get tax back. Or if you are able to pay in cash. The store is about the 3-4 store on the right-hand side of the bridge as you cross over the Arno river.

3. Bottega delle Stampe <http://www.bottegadellestampe.com/>

This store near the Ponte Vecchio on Borgo San Jacopo (56r) specialises in old, antique prints that are beautifully framed (or not). The prints date back to the 1500s, but the older they are and the better condition ones can be quite pricey. If you are into antique maps and map illustrations, this is a great place to find quality items. Unfortunately, the store does not offer tax free for non-EU residents.

4. Calzature Francesco da Firenze

(Via Santo Spirito 62r, 055-212-428) This is a cobbler who makes both men and women's shoes and sandals. He has a workshop in the back of the storefront where he makes the shoes. It is so cool to see a craftsman at work and know that your footwear was handmade.

5. Antichita Antonella Pratesi http://www.yourwaytoflorence.com/arts_antiques/expo/a110.htm

(Via dei Fossi, 7/r) This antique store has nice pieces of antiques that would look very shabby chic in most homes. There were some beautiful prints and birdcages, plus furniture. We picked up a framed Max Beerbohm caricature of John Singer Sargent from the early 1900s for 60-Euros. Great store for furnishings.

6. Lorenzaccio Ceramica Toscana <http://www.lorenzaccio.it/>

This ceramic store near the Central Mercado and the Medici Chapel also has an outdoor stall. The store has all kinds of pieces for the house, ranging from plates to pitchers to candlesticks. The best buy are the ceramic olive oil bottles that make great gifts - the nicer ones range from 35-euros to 80-euros. They do offer tax free, which would nearly cover the shipping cost if you were to ship to the US. If you're buying a couple of pieces, I would try to bargain it down to 10% or more. [Tip: you're likely to get a better discount if you happen to be there when the guy is working rather than the lady - I believe that they are cousins and their families own the store.]

7. Petruzzi's (silversmith)

This was recommended to me by a friend, who visited Florence many years ago. She said that she and her sister met the owner of the store who happened to do a lot of the work there. In fact, he took them downstairs to show them his workshop. Anyway, the store carries every silver item imaginable (utensils, silveware, jewelry, cufflinks, etc.). I've bought both jewelry and cufflinks from Mr. Petruzzi. Recently, I found a silver store near me in London (Howard Jones) who carries Mr. Petruzzi's stuff but costed a lot more. Mr. Petruzzi is one of those old artisans from Florence! I don't know that he does much of the work anymore, but I like buying from

shops like this more than the bigger department stores where everything is machine-made and not as personal. Petruzzi's is at the other end of the Ponte Vecchio bridge from the Duomo. In fact, as you are cross the bridge from the Duomo side, his is the last store on the right.

Internet Access

- **CYBEROFFICE**

You can have a new email account for free, separate workstations to your Internet access and you can, write, photocopy, scan and fax (send & receive) your documents.

Address: Via San Gallo 4/r

Opening times: every day from 9,30 am to 9 pm

Phone & Fax: 055 211103

- **IL CAIRO INTERNET POINT PHONE CENTER**

Separate workstations to your Internet access, Scanner service free of charge, B/w & Colour Printer for your Photos, Low cost international phone calls calling home, International Phone Cards in/out Italy & vice versa, Laptop assistance & telephone line connection to your Provider, Computer configuration / installation & assistance, Arab, English, Italian & Spanish language assistance in/outside of Italy

Address: Via de' Macci, 90/r

Opening times: every day from 9,30 am to 9 pm

Phone: 055 263 8336 / **Fax:** 055 263 8272 / **Email:** ilcairo@ilcairo.it

Website - More info: <http://www.ilcairo.it/>

- **INTERNET POINT PARADISE**

14 separate workstations to your Internet access.

Address: Via Frà Bartolommeo, 4/red/rosso

Phone: +39 055 50 48 915

Sito web - Maggiori informazioni: <http://www.paradisepoint.it>

- **INTERNET TRAIN**

15 Internet points in Florence. To have informations about each [give a look to the list](#).

Website - More info: http://www.internettrain.it/wel_eng.asp

- **WEBPUCCINO**

40 Windows workstations with the fastest link in town. Ambience with good music and modern art in the heart of Renaissance Florence just 2 steps from the Medici Chapels and the Central Train Station. Student discounts and cheap multisessions packages are available for every pocket. Laptop connections and digital cameras photo downloads are also available. You can also get a home ISP Account to connect your Laptop PC if you have a house phone available or otherwise use our Home Web Mobile GPRS Service.

Address: Via de Conti 22/r

Opening times: every day from 10 am to 10 pm

Phone: 055 2776469 / **Fax:** 055 2670339 / **Email:**

rentaphone@webpuccino.it

Tuscany

Day 1 - 10/11 Saturday

Route: Florence airport --> San Leonino

Hotel: Belvedere di San Leonino (Meals: L, D).

Tel: 0577 740887 Address: 5. Leonino, 53011C ostellinion Chiont(i SI)

Day 2 - 10/12 Sunday

Route: 40 miles - San Leonino --> Radda in Chianti --> Castellina in Chianti --> (downhill) San Leonino

Hotel: Belvedere di San Leonino (Meals: L, D).

Tel: 0577 740887 Address: 5. Leonino, 53011C ostellinion Chiont(i SI)

- **Radda in Chianti**: The nearby town of [Radda in Chianti](#) is also home to another of the regions museum treasures. The new Museum of Sacred Art is housed in the Church of Santa Maria del Prato, and houses a collection of important sacred art including the famous painting "Madonna of Pilgrims of Gailoe," which was painted by Simone Martini, as well as pieces by Fra Bartolomeo and other artists.
Restaurant:
 - There is a pizzeria **right on the road with a little veranda with plastic chairs out front**. Very informal but excellent pizza - the best we had in our tour of Italy. and trust me, we ate a LOT of pizza.
 - That pizzeria is very good...the town is small, I don't think you'll be able to miss it (the pizzeria is close to a great Alimentari/charcuterie shop...we bought lots of our groceries - fantastic sausages/cheeses, etc - there & at the co-op supermarket around the corner & up the street. Also, around the corner from the Alimentari, was a wonderful informal trattoria (with the best ribollita soup I've ever had)...it was on the left side, behind a gate & had outdoor/indoor seating...anyone remember it's name??
 - We had sandwiches at **La Bottega di Giovannino**. We sat out on the little deck in front of the store.
 - After finding a room just down the road, outside the walls, we walked into town to find the best pizza in Italy. **Pizzeria Trattoria da Michele on Viale XI Febbraio** in Radda in Chianti stills brings back wonderful memories of taking our pizza back to our Tuscan hillside view of the vineyards to watch a sunset with a couple bottles of chianti...6 years ago and it's still one of my all time vaction memories.
 - There is a place **next door to the Leoplodo** that is wonderful. Rada is great!
 - We had one of our best meals in Tuscany at Le Vigne. It is located just before you enter the village of Radda...to left and down the hill...cute place, nice views, and great Lamb chops...enjoy! About 1 mile before you enter the town of Radda on the left side. Le Vigne in Radda in Chianti tel. 0577 738640
 - There's a Coop in Radda, as well as an alimentari right in town.

- There was an excellent restaurant right in Radda...up the street **from the corner Alimentari/butcher shop...near the CO-OP store**...can't remember the name, but it has a lovely courtyard area & wonderful food (the entrance was through a gated wall).
- highly recommend **La Bottega in Volpaia** which is about 10 minutes away from Radda, here is a link to their website: <http://www.ristorantichianti.it/english/bottega.html>
Dishes we especially enjoyed (ate here twice)
Ribolitta - traditional tuscan soup (eaten with fork since it is so thick)
Linguini with Truffles
Cinghiali- Wild Boar

- **Castellina in Chianti:**

- Restanrant

Albergaccio di Castellina: Via Fiorentina, 59, Castellina In Chianti 53011, Italy

Tel: +39.0577.741042

Notes: We ate out on the patio as it was a warm summer night. The interior of the restaurant and patio where decorated in a traditional tuscan manner. In summary a very nice evening with great food and friendly staff. Reservations are a must. A fixed price five course menu.

Antica Trattoria La Torre: Piazza del Comune 15, Castellina In Chianti 53011, Italy

Tel: +39 0577 740236

Notes: Set just to the side of the main square, this lovely trattoria offers a good selection of dishes. Sitting out, under the shade, we dined on wonderful food and sipped great local wine.

Pizzeria il Fondaccio: via Ferruccio, 27, Castellina In Chianti 53011, Italy

Tel: +390577741084

Price range*: \$29-43

Special features: Outdoor seating, Local cuisine

Notes: At the risk of sounding cliché, it was the best pizza my wife and I ever had! The service was wonderful - very patient with our rookie Italian. The antipasti were also great... and the limoncello and grappa didn't hurt a bit!

- We had really nice meals at La Torre. The food and service was very good. Did not like Treporte and would not recommend it.

- I would definitely recommend: Il Gallo Papa for a beautiful meal (in

Via delle Volte - center of Castellina in Chianti) you should probably reserve a table because it is very small. And Il Fondaccio dei Dottori for an informal dinner - excellent wine list(just a mile outside the town).

Interesting Place

- There is a COOP supermarket in Town and I believe it closes by 5 or 6 in the evening. Additionally there are smaller stores selling fresh fruit , bread, milk etc. There is also a pharmacist. There is also the weekly market in town in the morning.

- Hi! According to a website I just came across, the Saturday market in Castellina begins at 8am and ends at 2pm.

Day 3 - 10/13 Monday

Route: 25 miles - San Leonino --> Monteriggioni --> Colle di Val d'Elsa --> San Gimignano

Hotel: Hotel Sovestro (Meals: B),

Tel: 0577 943153. Address: Localita' Sovestro, 63, 53037 San Gimignano (Siena)

located in a garden setting about 1 mile from town. In the evening, when the tour buses leave, we have the town to ourselves.

- **Monteriggioni**: a wonderful walled Medieval place to explore, enjoy the delightful espresso that is very addicting, and perhaps buy a Chianti Classico cycling jersey. Walking the ramparts allows for terrific views of the surrounding countryside.

Restaurant

Bar dell'Orso: Localita' colonna monteriggioni, 23, Monteriggioni 53035, Italy

Tel: 0577.305074

Price range*: \$15-22

Special features: Child-friendly, Outdoor seating, Local cuisine, Take Out

Notes: a warmy and homey place, the food is tasty and delicious and everything sounds so tuscan-style!

- **Colle di Val d'Elsa**: also walled and high on a hill for protection. This is the glass center of Italy. 95% of Italy's and 15% of the world's leaded glass production comes from here. There are many shops to see the wares and several studios where you can watch the process.

Restaurant

Arnolfo: Via XX Settembre, 50, Colle di Val d'Elsa 53034, Italy

Tel: +39.0577.920549

Website: <http://www.arnolfo.it>

- **San Gimignano**: a descent and then a final climb takes us to our destination town, the city of towers. Rich merchants 9 centuries ago built these towers to show their wealth. Of the original 70 towers, only 16 remain but it is still a most impressive sight and a major tourist destination.

Day 4 - 10/14 Tuesday

Route: 40 miles - San Gimignano --> (climb) Volterra --> San Gimignano

Hotel: Hotel Sovestro (Meals: B),

Tel: 0577 943153. Address: Località Sovestro, 63, 53037 San Gimignano (Siena)

After breakfast, we depart for the out and back ride to Volterra. Very quickly we leave the tourist hoards behind as we enjoy our ride in the Tuscan countryside. We leave the province of Siena and enter the province of Pisa. A climb to Volterra brings us beautiful vistas and an interesting town of red tiled roofs.

- **Volterra**: known for its Etruscan artifacts. The Etruscans were contemporaries of Romans. Unfortunately much of their heritage is lost, but there is quite a lot here. Rick Steves calls Volterra his favorite Tuscan hill town.
- **Piazza Martiri Della Libertà**:

Day 5 - 10/15 Wednesday

Route: 50 miles - San Gimignano --> Casole d'Elsa --> (climb) Murlo

Hotel: Albergo di Murlo (Meals: B, D).

Tel: 0577 814033. Address: Via Martiri d i Rigosecco 1/ 3, Vescovado di Murlo(SI)

We have many miles of gentle terrain before a climb brings us to Murlo, where our albergo with a large pool awaits us.

- **Casole d'Elsa**: We continue our trip heading south. Our town of the day is Casole d'Elsa. You can park your bicycle at the base of town (not the base of the hill) and take the elevator. The whimsical art here is most enjoyable. After visiting and perhaps picking up lunch, a descent awaits. We continue our riding through the countryside.

Day 6 - 10/16 Thursday

Route: 35 miles - Murlo --> Buonconvento --> famed Monte Oliveto Maggiore abbey --> Pienza

Hotel: Hotel Corsignano (Meals: B).

Tel: 0578 748501 Address: V. Della Madonnina, 11, 53026 Pienza (SI)

- **Buonconvento**: Leaving Murlo, it's downhill for several miles to the town of Buonconvento. There are many choices for our morning coffee and to pick up a picnic lunch.
- **famed Monte Oliveto Maggiore abbey**: But don't dawdle. We have a tour of the famed Monte Oliveto Maggiore abbey scheduled for late morning. This magnificent building perches high on a cliffside. After visiting the cloisters and refectory, we can visit the wine cellar and learn about wine production and taste the local product.
- **Trequanda**: another fortified town. A fine trattoria off the main square. Checker board church off to the side of the square is filled with rare treasures. Not open often, but ask at the wine/tourist shop at the corner opposite the church, someone there should know how to find the key.
- **Montelifre**: Midway between Trequanda, ruin of old Castello di Montelifre,
- **Montisi**: small town. 13th granary.
- **Castelmuzio**: curving 2 km drive through woods.
- **Petroio**: small workshops hand-crafted pots.
- **Pienza**: We reach Pienza. In the 15th century Pope Pius II transformed the small village in which he was born into a symbol of the Renaissance. There are many wonderful places to explore and dine. The views over the valley are breathtaking. Visit ancient monastery of Sant' Anna in Camprena, where "The English Patient" was filmed.

Day 7 - 10/17 Friday

Route: 35 or 45 miles - Pienza to Pienza

Hotel: Hotel Corsignano (Meals: B).

Tel: 0578 748501 Address: V. Della Madonnina, 11, 53026 Pienza (SI)

- **San Quirico d'Orcia**: Today's ride is actually two rides. Both routes take you first to San Quirico d'Orcia,
- **Montalcino**: then to Montalcino. known for its Brunello wine. Once in Montalcino, you can choose to retrace your route back to Pienza or you can opt for the challenging loop that takes you to Abbey of Sant' Antimo.
- **Abbey of Sant' Antimo**:
- **Castiglione D'Orcia**:

Day 8 - 10/18 Saturday

Route: 30 miles - Pienza --> Montepulciano --> Castiglione del Lago

Hotel: Duca della Corgna (Meal: B).

Tel: 0759 53238 Address: Via B. Buozzi, 143, 06061 Castiglione del Lago (PG)

Be sure to visit the fortress and take in the lake shore.

- **Montepulciano**: Our route takes us east, with our first stop at Montepulciano. As is typical of the towns we visit, it is well preserved. It is known for its Vino Nobili di Montepulciano.
- **Pozzuolo**:
- **Castiglione del Lago**: We then cross into Umbria for a visit to Castiglione del Lago, located on Lake Trasimeno, the largest lake in peninsular Italy. Our hotel is the

Day 9 - 10/119 Sunday

Route: 35 miles - Castiglione del Lago --> Cortona

Hotel: Hotel San Luca (Meals: B).

Tel: 0575 630460 Address: Piazza Garibaldi, 1, 52044 Cortona (AR)

We head north today, back into Tuscany. The first part of our ride is gentle as we ride in the river valley. Chances are good we will encounter local cycling clubs on their training rides.

- **Cortona:** It has a magnificent setting. It is 700 feet above the valley floor and the views are awesome. A steady 4.5% grade takes us to the town and our hotel, the San Luca. This hotel is upside down, with the rooms below the lobby and built into the hillside. Great views await us at breakfast. Just around the corner is Via Roma, the main street in Cortona, and the only flat one.

Days 10 - 10/20 Monday

Route: 34 or 40 miles - Cortona --> Castiglione Fiorentino --> Cortona

Hotel: Hotel San Luca (Meals: B).

Tel: 0575 630460 Address: Piazza Garibaldi, 1, 52044 Cortona (AR)

Today we offer two ride options, a challenging 40 mile ride into the back hills east of Cortona or a shorter easier ride to the north. Quickly we climb from Cortona, leaving the tourists behind as we discover rural Italy.

Both rides take us to Castiglione Fiorentino, which was taken by forces from Siena, Arezzo, Perugia, and Florence over the centuries.

- **Castiglione Fiorentino:**

Day 11 - 10/21 Tuesday

Route: 42 miles - Cortona --> (climb) Lucignano --> Asciano --> Arbia

Hotel: Hotel Montaperti (Meals: B, D).

Tel: 0577 36741 Address: Loc. Arbia - Uscita Casetta, 53041 Siena
Our hotel for the next three nights is the Montaperti Hotel, named for the nearby village where a battle was fought between the rival towns of Siena and Florence in 1260, and was commemorated by Dante in The Inferno. The hotel offers a pool and fitness center.

Our day begins with a 700' descent from Cortona to the valley floor.

- **Lucignano**: After about 12 miles we start our climb to Lucignano, a walled town worth exploring. Its unusual feature is that its streets spiral. After walking through, and perhaps having a coffee, we remount and continue.
 - Thursday weekly market
Visit the Civic Museum on the Piazza del Tribunale, had golden tree of life
Open Tues, thurs, fri, sat and sun 10am-1pm, 2:30pm-6 pm
- **Asciano**: Asciano is the next town we visit. This is a great place for lunch and exploration.

As we continue our ride, we are in a highly picturesque part of Tuscany. On the map, a green line along our route denotes this. But you won't need any confirmation of what your eyes behold.

- church above town, second sunday of each month has a handicraft market. Civic Museum has collection of sacred art. Next door serves pizza and local specialities. From here the old Laurentana road passes through the last of the Crete Senese and leads to Siena.
Specialities - worlds finest beef comes out of Valdichiana - resturants that serve Chiania will note it on their menus. They are white steers (cows). Another unique animal is the Cinta Senese a black wild pig with white band. Prime area for white truffle. Season is Sept - Dec. Pasta specialty is the pici a slim pasta.

Day 12 - 10/22 Wednesday

Route: 0 miles - Visit to Siena. Catch the local bus for the 35 minute trip to Siena.

Hotel: Hotel Montaperti (Meals: B, D).

Tel: 0577 36741 Address: Loc. Arbia - Uscita Casetta, 53041 Siena

We have arranged for a tour of some of the more interesting places for you. The rest of the day is for shopping, exploring or people watching at the cafes.

- **Siena:**

Day 13 - 10/23 Thursday

Route: 36 miles - Arbia to Arbia

Hotel: Hotel Montaperti (Meals: B, D).

Tel: 0577 36741 Address: Loc. Arbia - Uscita Casetta, 53041 Siena

- **Castelnuovo Berardenga**: Today is market day in Castelnuovo Berardenga, just 7 miles into the ride. It's a good place to pick up fruit or a picnic.

There are two winery options on today's loop through Chianti. The first is a small winery in the village of Villa a Sesta. The second is a few miles further and is much larger.

Gaiole in Chianti is the start of the L'Eroica bike event that features vintage bicycles and vintage clothing with rides over the strade bianche, the unpaved white roads. No doubt you will have seen signs all over Tuscany indicating that the road we are on is part of this event.

Day 14 - 10/24 Friday

Route: 35 miles - Arbia --> San Leonino

Hotel: Belvedere di San Leonino (Meals: L, D).

Tel: 0577 740887 Address: 5. Leonino, 53011C ostellinion Chiont(i SI)

Our tour is ending and we must head back to Belvedere di San Leonino. The climbs let us reflect on our increased fitness over the last two weeks. But we are far from done with the beauty. Today will be memorable as well. Our tour ends with a celebratory dinner.

Day 15 - 10/25 Saturday

Route: San Leonino to Florence airport - We will depart after breakfast for the 60 minute transfer to the airport.

Don't forget

- Carry small packets of Kleenex for the bathrooms...’nuff said.
- Hang on to one menu until the end of the meal at every restaurant, and when you order an item, point to it, say it, and then say the price so the waiter knows you are aware of it, i.e. “Vorrei gnocchidieci euro, per favore.” With the exception of four restaurants throughout our entire Italy trip, any HANDWRITTEN bill had incorrect charges for the plates of food we ordered, and I’m not talking about the extra charge of cover or bread (il coperto or pane.) Inevitably the waiter had written price of the items one or two euros higher on the bill than they were on the menu, or the bill contained additional items we had not ordered (hoping we wouldn’t notice or ask). When questioned they were happy to change the price to what the menu had listed, or take off the bill what was not ordered, but his got to be very tiring being on the defensive all the time, knowing they were purposely trying to rip us off because we were tourists. After the first time we noticed this we watched our bill closely. This was throughout Italy, and was especially bad in Rome. Even the famous L’ Orso in Rome tried this technique.
- Useful Phrases:
 - where is = Dov `e (doe vay)
 - How much is it? = Quant `e ?
 - What is it? = Che cosa?
 - Do you speak English? = Parla inglese?
 - I would like a reservation for _____ people. =Vorrei una prenotazione per ___ persone.
 - Italian numbers 1-100.
 - please = per favore.
 - thank you = grazie
- Log your travels. I did this as a keepsake, saving receipts for the trains, museums, etc. to glue in later. After skipping only one day of writing I had difficulty remembering all the wonderful things we experienced. The amazing sights were endless and began to run together.