

BENVENUTI A FLORENCE!

Florence is such a charming city, filled with history, art and oh so much food! Here's some of our favorite spots we've hit over the years...

RESTAURANTS:

- **Osteria Antica Mescita San Niccolo**, Via di S. Niccolò, 60 r: If you're cruising around the other side of the river (Trastevere), this is a great spot for lunch, or even an aperitivo!
- **O Munaciello**, Via Maffia, 31r: This place! Wow! It's tucked down a very unassuming street but it's so fun inside! Crazy decorations everywhere and very tasty pasta and pizza! Also on the other side of the river.
- **Club Culinario Toscano da Osvaldo**, Piazza dei Peruzzi, 3R: We've been hitting this restaurant for years and even had a group dinner here during our 1st year of retreats! An awesome spot for lunch or dinner!
- **Due Fratellini**, Via dei Cimatori, 38/r: Cheap sandwiches, it can't get much better than that! We LOVE this place! Simple ingredients on fresh baked bread served out of a hole in the wall by some cheerful brothers.
- **Mercato Centrale**, Via dell'Ariento: The original Mercato Centrale! This place is a glorious food court upstairs and a food market in the morning downstairs. Wifi, fans, shade and bathrooms too! YAY!
- **La Bussola**, Via Porta Rossa, 56r: A great pizza spot if you're looking for a swankier spot to eat.
- **Vanilla Club**, Via dei Saponai, 14R: If you're looking for a unique place to grab an equally unique cocktail, track down this place! It's a speakeasy type bar with a 1920's theme. Cocktails are served in tea cups! Fun!

GELATO:

- **Edoardo**, Piazza del Duomo, 45/R: This is the only gelato spot we've found that negates the need to find gelato away from main tourist spots. Amazing gelato and right next to the Duomo! Grab a number and get in line, it's worth it!
- **Grom** (all over): it's a gelato chain throughout Italy so it's a reliable spot when you're not sure where to go.

COFFEE:

- **Finisterrae**, Piazza di Santa Croce, 12: Tasty pastries and delicious coffee right next to Santa Croce. Need we say more?

SITES:

- **San Lorenzo Market**, Via dell'Ariento: A full street of shopping! Outdoor stalls with lots of leather purses, keychains, scarves and souvenirs. Don't be afraid to barter!
- **The Duomo**, Piazza del Duomo: You HAVE to see this beauty! One of the best churches in all of Italy. Feeling ambitious? Grab a ticket and climb to the top of the dome! The ticket also is good for the museum, church, crypt, baptistery and bell tower...

- **Il Campanile**, Piazza del Duomo: The bell tower next to the Duomo! Usually has a shorter line and it's a shorter climb. WIN. Plus there's regular intervals to rest WITH SHADE and you get a gorgeous view of the Duomo from the top!
- **Paperback Exchange**, Via delle Oche, 4-red: Need a quick read for your vacation or the train ride home? This little spot is an English bookstore!
- **Pegna dal 1860**, Via dello Studio, 8: Right around the corner from the Paperback Exchange is this hidden gem of a market. It's stunning inside, has a delicious selection of foods and even some tasty souvenirs to bring home.
- **Zecchi Colori Belle Arti**, Via dello Studio, 19: One of the oldest (and coolest) art stores in Florence. Worth taking a peek inside if just to see the wall of jars of pigments used to make paints for frescos.
- **Fabriano Boutique**, Via del Corso, 59: Another great art supply shopping spot! Gorgeous paper products, leather keychains and fountain pens galore!
- **Officina Profumo-Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella**, Via della Scala, 16: The oldest perfume shop in Florence! Over 600 years old and stunning to see.
- **Bargello National Museum**, Via del Proconsolo, 4: As much as we love the Uffizzi and the Accademia, the Bargello is a great break from the crowds. More of a sculpture museum, it's a great place to sketch. They encourage it throughout the museum with benches and folding chairs to sit on and sketch for a while!

FUN THINGS TO LOOK FOR:

- **Free fizzy water fountain**, Piazza della Signoria: Tucked along the left side of Palazzo Vecchio, there's a free water fountain that gushes out chilled fizzy water! Perfect for a hot day! Don't worry -- there's regular water too.
- **Street Art**, ALL OVER: Florence has a LOT of street art around the city. The two most prominent artists are Clet and Blub. Clet is known for his stickers that alter the traffic signs into fun scenes. Blub has a whole series called "l'arte sa nuotare" or "art knows how to swim!" Keep an eye out for famous pieces of art that look like they too a swim during the great flood...
- **Flood markers**, all over: The river that runs through Florence, the Arno, has overflowed its banks many times over the centuries. The most recent one was in 1966 (worse than the 1577 flood) when it flooded 22 feet above the river's edge! Keep an eye up high along the building walls for white marble markers that indicate the height of the flood waters in that area. There's one in the Piazza in front of the Duomo (on the right corner of the stretch of shops behind the baptistry) and some more in Piazza Santa Croce (stand at the very edge of the piazza away from the church, there's some on the buildings in the rear left and right corners).