



EXPERIENCE

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Florentine Renaissance

Exploring a new world in
one of Italy's oldest cities.



To stroll the narrow, cobbled streets of Florence is to be transported back in time: With its magnificent cathedrals, majestic palaces and marble statues appearing at every turn, the entire city is an open-air museum dedicated to the Renaissance period. Bold visionaries such as Filippo Brunelleschi, who designed the celebrated red dome of the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore (known as the Duomo), forever transformed the skyline of this ancient city. It's no surprise, then, that the city's historic center—one of the best preserved in all of Europe—is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

And yet the Tuscan capital is exceptionally forward-thinking and a leader of innovation. From modern fashion boutiques to haute cuisine to the way in which Florentines embrace life to the fullest, there's energy and fresh ideas around every ancient corner. On any given night, you'll find friends meeting for an aperitivo prior to feasting on bistecca alla Fiorentina at one of the city's hottest new restaurants, couples walking along the Arno river and families gathered for

gelato in their local piazza.

As temperatures cool and summer crowds dissipate, fall in Florence is the perfect time to experience a more authentic vibe. There's lots to explore this season, including some stunning new properties fit for royalty, a tailor-made shopping experience, and an exhibit that demonstrates the remarkable power of women in business and fashion.



Royal Dreams

Many of Florence's finest hotels echo the city's distinct old-meets-new charm. The Place Firenze, for instance, was recently renovated and houses 20 modern light-filled rooms and suites with elegant touches like Pratesi sheets and cashmere throws, while the lobby features the inviting glow of a fireplace that fits harmoniously into the contemporary and neo-vintage decor found throughout the property. For sweeping views you won't find anywhere else in the city, book the Panoramic Loft overlooking Piazza Santa Maria

Novella. The square, which dates back to 1287, is named for the breathtaking church whose marble facade, by Leon Battista Alberti, is the oldest standing facade of the main churches in Florence. Just off the piazza is famed apothecary Officina Profumo-Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella—considered the oldest pharmacy in the world, its history begins in 1221 when Dominican friars started crafting medicinal products from their gardens. Stop by for sumptuous perfumes, soaps and beauty products—historical preparations based on the essential principles of aromatic plants—and to take in the spectacular floral decorations that would look equally suitable at a royal wedding.

One of the hotel's new initiatives, the Place of Wonders, offers exclusive access to the city's hidden gems, such as visits to the Gucci-owned Ginori 1735 flagship store (guests can also tour the Ginori factory in Sesto Fiorentino) and a behind-the-scenes tour of the Sorgentone e Mecatti Liutai studio, where violins and violas are handcrafted and restored. Following a six-year restoration, the 15th-

century Palazzo Portinari Salviati reopened its doors this past spring. The childhood home of Dante's muse Beatrice Portinari, the historic Palazzo includes 13 luxury suites. Guests—including most recently Jane Fonda—are spoiled with sweeping skyline views of the Duomo and other architectural masterpieces. The most buzzed-about hotel of the season is Collegio alla Querce, Auberge Resorts Collection. Set to open in 2023, the extensive five-star property sits on the site of a former cultural institution and boarding school, and encompasses 16th-century buildings, including an original chapel and theater. The resort—located in Via della Piazzuola—will feature 82 rooms and suites (including a covetable, 2,250-square-foot presidential suite), art gallery, spa, swimming pool, restaurant and dedicated wine-tasting room, as well as a bar and cigar lounge set in the former academic admissions office. The scenic grounds boast a beautiful five-level Baroque garden—the perfect backdrop for milestone celebrations or for simply taking in the region's splendor over a glass of

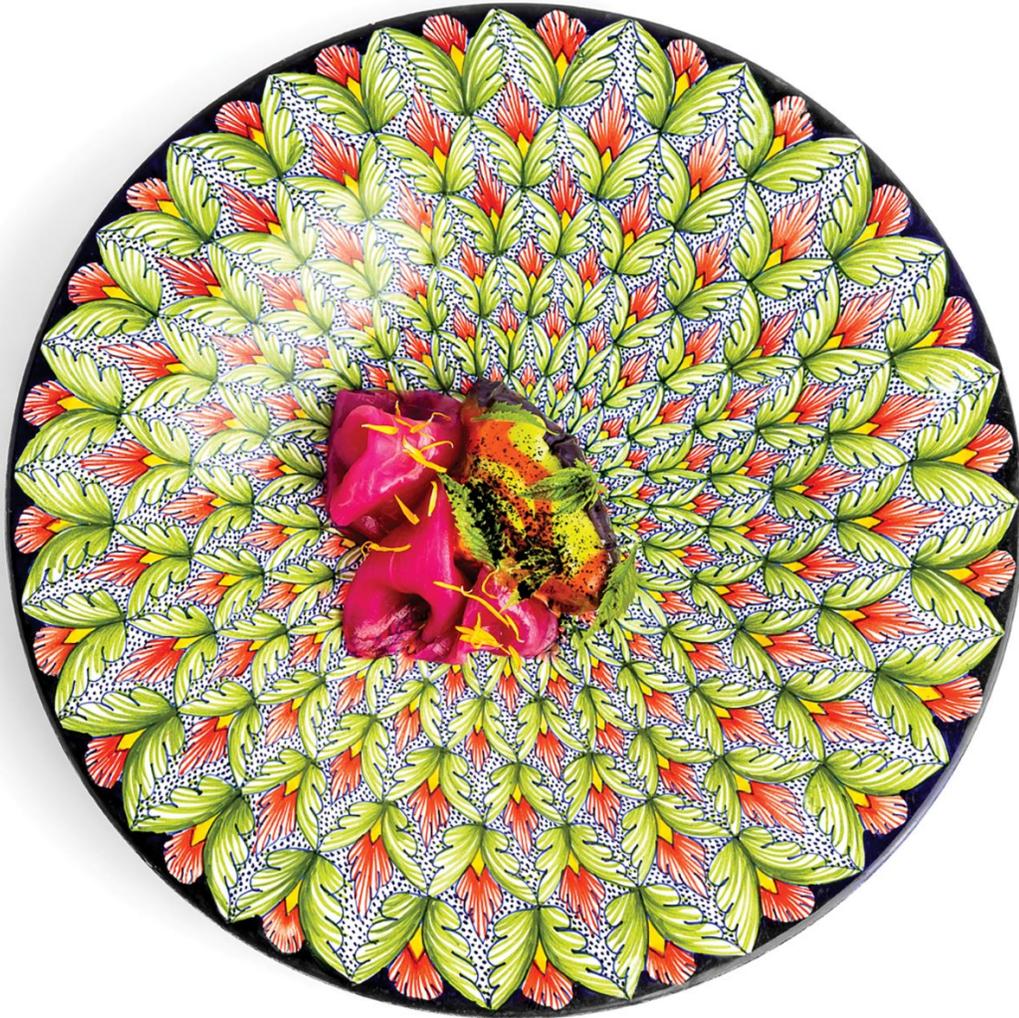
Chianti.

Art, Italian Style

Few names carry as much influence on the international fashion scene as Salvatore Ferragamo. The Italian shoemaker-turned-fashion-icon defined craftsmanship during his lifetime, outfitting celebrities from Marilyn Monroe to Sophia Loren with his innovative designs. Today, the family-run business has expanded to include six luxury hotels under the Lungarno Collection name, attracting Hollywood A-listers, aristocrats and diplomats. What many people don't realize is that Salvatore's wife, Wanda Miletto Ferragamo, kept the famed fashion house going after his untimely death in 1960. Women in Balance, a must-see exhibit at the Museo Salvatore Ferragamo, tells her fascinating story via photography, archive film and, of course, shoes. The couple went on to have six children, the majority of whom would join the family business. Until her death in 2018 at age 97, Wanda still played a hands-on role in the company. As the

exhibit title suggests, she was seeking a balance between work and family—an issue as relevant today as it was in the 1960s. The exhibit also delves into how women helped break down gender-based work barriers. Pop into the nearby, Ferragamo-owned Gallery Hotel Art for a further look at glamour through an Italian lens. Following a stylish makeover, the hotel has recently lined its walls with the works of Milan-born photographer Alan Gelati. His striking images of famous faces—from Sean Penn to Anya Taylor-Joy—are being shown for the first time in Italy. Stay for a refreshing negroni in the Fusion Bar & Restaurant. Florence is a city of contrasts, so it's only fitting that one can go from sipping the latest trendy cocktail to admiring centuries-old objets d'art in a matter of minutes. Art enthusiasts alike should check out the Giorgio Vasari-designed Uffizi Galleries for their collections from the Medici, Habsburg-Lorraine and Savoy families. The Medici family ruled Florence for almost three centuries, developing new banking systems. The family also supported artists like Michelangelo, Donatello,

Botticelli and Da Vinci—who may never have achieved greatness without the patronage of the Medici.



Best Bites

Osteria del Cinghiale Bianco gained recent attention thanks to Stanley Tucci's hit series, *Searching for Italy*. One of Tucci's favorite Florence haunts, the restaurant—housed on the ground floor of a 13th-century tower—specializes in simple Florentine fare prepared to perfection, such as its signature pappardelle with wild boar sauce. One of the world's most sought-after restaurants, Enoteca Pinchiorri has once again received a coveted three-star rating from the latest Michelin Guide. Acclaimed chef Annie Féolde was the first woman to earn three stars in Italy thanks to her imaginative dishes such as raw cuttlefish marinated in parmigiano Reggiano milk and fermented lemon. The dessert menu is mouth-watering: Don't miss the vanilla biscuit with peanut mousse. Its extensive wine cellar has more than 100,000 bottles, including standouts such as first-production Château Margaux and Tignanello. No trip to Italy is complete without a private wine tour. Fine Vintage is one of several luxury tours beginning in Florence and touting tastings in the rolling hills of Tuscany. Be sure to book Guide

Philip Goodband, a Vintners scholar and former chairman of the Institute of Masters of Wine, as he has served as wine adviser to Queen Elizabeth for more than a decade.

Shop Like A Local

Florence is joining the ranks of New York and Milan as another fashion capital of the world. Many storied Italian brands have factories here—Gucci, Pucci and Cavalli among them—in part because of the region’s high-quality craftsmanship. LuisaViaRoma, for example, as transformed over the decades from a small boutique selling straw hats in the 1930s to a creative concept store carrying emerging Italian designers. For proper retail therapy, book a personalized shopping experience with Jana Soon (shopinflorence.com), a former dancer with the National Ballet of Canada who holds a degree from Florence’s renowned fashion institute Polimoda. She offers exclusive access to luxe leather factories and brings visitors to sites such as the last remaining jewelry store on Ponte Vecchio—which

ends with a workshop (often she arranges for a Michelin-star chef to serve dinner in the boutique). Soon recently helped a client hunt down an ancient Roman coin valued at more than 13,000 euros. “It’s from around the year 100 B.C. and features a gold setting with diamonds in it,” Soon says proudly. She credits Florence’s stylish appeal to its walkability: “You can go everywhere by foot and see how the Renaissance began and how, in many ways, it is still going strong. There’s nowhere else like it.”

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