

FLORENCE

Walking around Florence, the cradle of the Renaissance, a visitor feels the presence of great genius, the place where the great masters Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Dante and Donatello created memorable paintings, sculpture, and literature.



TRANSPORTATION

Since the major sights are packed into a relatively small area in the city center, Florence is best seen on foot. There are also city buses, which run from 5:15 am to 1:00 am. Buy tickets before you board; they're sold at tobacco shops and newsstands. You can also see Florence by bicycle, which can be rented at **Alinari**, Via Guelfa 85/r, tel. 055/280500.



BANKS AND CURRENCY

Banks are open weekdays 8:30 am to 1:30 pm, and 2:45-3:45 pm. Italy's currency is the Euro. Coins in denominations of 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50 cents and 1 & 2 Euros. Bank notes of 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200 and 500 Euros are legal tender.



POSTAGE

Post offices are open from 8:15 am to 1:40 pm weekdays, and Saturday mornings. Stamps can be purchased at the post office or at tobacco shops, and often also at hotels. The Italian mail system is notoriously

slow- allow about 3 weeks for a letter to reach the U.S., and even longer for postcards. Postcards with a short greeting and signature cost approximately one Euro to send, but a letter rate is charged if the message is lengthy (it's the Italian system).



TELEPHONES

Pay phones take coins, a gettone (token), or a magnetic card. Hotels add exorbitant service charges for long-distance calls, so it's best to go to the "Telefoni" telephone exchange, where the operator assigns you a booth and collects payment when you're done. It's even cheaper to use an AT&T or Sprint calling card.



SHOPPING

Florence offers top quality for your money in leather goods, linens and upholstery fabrics, gold and silver jewelry, and cameos. Many shops also offer fine old prints. The most famous shopping street is Via Tornabuoni, with shops like Ferragamo, Gucci, Giorgio Armani... Goldsmiths and jewelry shops can be found on and around Ponte Vecchio and in the Santa Croce area (where you will also find the handicraft section). The best area for shoes is around the Duomo. For more general purchases, go to **Principe**, in Piazza Strozzi, a quality apparel store incorporating several designer boutiques, or **UPIM**, in Piazza della Repubblica, which has all kinds of inexpensive goods.



EATING

There is no shortage of eating establishments in Florence, ranging from very expensive to inexpensive.

The **Enoteca Pinchiorri**, which serves traditional Tuscan dishes as well as creative nouvelle cuisine, ranks as one of Italy's best restaurants and is very expensive: Via Ghibellina 87, tel. 055/242777. **La Marenmmana** serves generous portions of local favorites such as *ribollita* (vegetable soup) and *stracotto* (beef stew) and is inexpensive: Via dei Macci 77r, tel. 055/241226.



PLACES TO VISIT

The **Duomo di Santa Maria de Fiore** houses priceless works of art, including Michelangelo's "Descent from the Cross"; the **Uffizi Gallery** has Italy's most important collection of paintings from the Gothic and Renaissance periods; Michelangelo's David is at the **Accademia Gallery**, and from the oldest bridge in Florence, **Ponte Vecchio**, you can see the Arno flowing below; the beautiful Fra Amgelico frescoes are in the Dominican monastery of **San Marco**, and at the 13th century church of **Santa Croce**, Machiavelli and Michelangelo are buried.