

The best MARCO POLO Insider Tips

Our top 15 Insider Tips



INSIDER TIP Dazzling mosaics

The golden glow of the Byzantine mosaics in the octagonal *Battistero di San Giovanni* is second to none in Florence (photo above) → p. 29

INSIDER TIP The most famous restoration workshop in the world

In the renowned *Opificio delle Pietre Dure*, an academy for art restoration, you can watch the students at work → p. 43

INSIDER TIP Truffle rolls and tomato juice

Elegant Florentines have taken their aperitif at *Procacci* since 1885: against this historic backdrop, scarcely one bite into your *panino tartufato* and you're lost → p. 65

INSIDER TIP Dining and theatre

The former salt store transforms itself each evening into an extraordinary restaurant with theatre show: *Teatro del Sale* → p. 86

INSIDER TIP Balmy nights in Fiesole

Florentine summer nights after a ballet performance of the *Estate Fiesolana* under the starry skies at the Teatro Romano in Fiesole are unforgettable → p. 107

INSIDER TIP Balcony high above the city

From the *Forte di Belvedere* you have a picture-perfect view over Florence to the hilltops of Fiesole in the distance – a truly unforgettable experience if an open-air exhibition is currently showing! → p. 54

INSIDER TIP City hotel with car park

In Florence, a rarity: driving your car in the garden of the city-centre hotel *Royal* and leaving it there → p. 95

INSIDER TIP Rose water

They've been distilling the delicate *Acqua di Rose* at the *Officina Profumo Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella*, part of the former monastery, since 1381 → p. 75

INSIDER TIP Horses in church

In the deconsecrated Romanesque San Pancrazio Church, you can visit the horse sculptures of Marino Marini as well as the *Sacello Rucellai* which was bricked until recently → p. 46

INSIDER TIP Artisans in the princess's garden

Between fragrant peonies, lemon trees and roses, craftspeople demonstrate their art on one weekend in May with the exhibition *Artigianato e Palazzo* (photo below) → p. 114

INSIDER TIP Lunch with Dante

Lunch-time menu for just 16 euros at one of the best and (in the evening) most expensive restaurants in the city: *Alle Murate* → p. 66

INSIDER TIP A space for modern art – at last

A breath of fresh air in the new *Museo Novecento* for Italian 20th century masterpieces → p. 47

INSIDER TIP Picture-book cinema

A visit to the *Odeon Cinehall* has an air of Hollywood about it. You sit in deep, plush seats, in the middle of this genuine 1920s cinema theatre. Films are shown in the original English three times a week → p. 86

INSIDER TIP Lunch at the market hall

If you want to eat well, but fast, grab yourself a seat on one of the benches at *Nerbone* with a plate of honest-to-goodness Florentine nosh – or eat on the newly designed top floor → p. 71

INSIDER TIP A market of yore

Tourists seldom make it out to the *Mercato di Sant'Amrogio*. The stalls of the fruit and vegetable sellers are grouped outside around this fine cast-iron market hall from 1873 with all its little shops → p. 80



BEST OF...

GREAT PLACES FOR FREE

Discover new places and save money

● **Art on Sundays**

If you happen to be in the city on the first Sunday in the month, you'll be lucky enough to catch *Domenical/Museo* when all the state museums offer free admission – from the Uffizi Gallery and Medici Chapels to the Galleria dell'Accademia with Michelangelo's David (photo) → p. 33

● **City tour with bus No C3**

The *electric minibus C3* drives through the narrow streets of old Florence, past the Piazza Pitti and Piazza Santa Croce and crosses the Arno several times a day. This makes it the cheapest city tour – not completely free of course, but for a mere 1.20 euros → p. 123

● **A break at the library**

You can sit virtually undisturbed under the arcades of the cloisters at the *Biblioteca delle Oblate*. Brunelleschi's dome is so close you could almost touch it, and there's a play area for the kids. The setting costs nothing, so you can treat yourself to a cappuccino and a brioche → p. 50

● **Open air sculpture gallery**

Perhaps the finest Florentine sculpture gallery stands out in the open, and there's not even an admission charge. At the *Loggia dei Lanzi*, you are surrounded by works by great artists such as Giambologna, Michelangelo or Donatello → p. 34

● **Fantastic view**

Bus route 12 takes you up the long winding road lined with trees to *Piazzale Michelangelo* where a replica of Michelangelo's David is standing. Take in the breath-taking panoramic view of the city and the Arno valley below for free → p. 60

● **Fuochi di San Giovanni**

Since the 14th century, Florence has celebrated its patron saint on 24 June. To mark the occasion, the city puts on a fabulous *firework display* for its residents and guests below the Piazzale Michelangelo → p. 114



Dots in guidebook refer to "Best of..." tips

ONLY IN FLORENCE

Unique experiences

● **Ponte Vecchio**

The Old Bridge is at its most beautiful when the city lights reflected in the Arno compete with the sparkle of the jewellery in the tiny shops on the bridge (photo) → p. 39

● **Uffizi**

Offices (*uffizi*) to accommodate the regional administration: that was Vasari's original brief when Cosimo I commissioned the building in 1559. Today, the *Galleria degli Uffizi* is famous the world over → p. 32

● **Florentine bargains**

Years ago, the Florentine hats were sold at the *Mercato San Lorenzo*. Nowadays it's not so easy finding a typical Tuscan souvenir, but it's fun trying as you stroll around the market → p. 79

● **Sweeten your day**

The *Café Rivoire* has always been a good place to immerse yourself in Florentine life. Come here to see and be seen – and drink the best hot chocolate in town → p. 64

● **Gelato artigianale**

From simple dealer in dairy produce to world-famous ice cream parlour: Despite stiff competition, *Vivoli* is still the Florentine ice cream parlour par excellence! The ice cream is made to traditional recipes and is exported on special occasions from the heart of Florence even as far as Australia → p. 66

● **Medieval luxury**

Do you fancy seeing how the rich families of 13th-century Florence lived? Just visit the *Museo dell'Antica Casa Fiorentina* in the Palazzo Davanzati. You'll be surprised at the degree of comfort which existed even then → p. 36

● **Scale Brunelleschi's dome**

It is 116.5 m/382 ft in height and still dominates the city skyline. If you can talk yourself into tackling the arduous climb up to the *dome*, you will be richly rewarded with the chance to see the 16th-century frescoes close up → p. 30



ONLY IN



DISCOVERY TOURS

1

FLORENCE AT A GLANCE



START: ① Piazza della Signoria

END: ② Teatro della Pergola

Distance:

→ 6 km/3.7 miles

1 day

Walking time
(without stops)
1½ hours



COSTS: 4–10 euros per admission to church/museum

The city of Florence is one gigantic living work of art. It is impossible to see everything so we recommend concentrating on the landmarks. The best way to really soak up this city's atmosphere is to take a stroll across its vast squares and along its winding narrow streets. This tour has been designed with precisely this in mind!

① Piazza della Signoria



08:00am The perfect start to the day is at ① **Piazza della Signoria** → p. 39 with a brioche and an excellent cappuccino to be taken at the famous **Rivoire** → p. 64 or even

Cities have many faces. If you want to get behind the scenes to explore their unique charm and head off the beaten track or find your way to green oases, handpicked restaurants or the best local activities, then these tailored Discovery Tours are just the right thing. Choose the best route for the day and follow in the footsteps of the MARCO POLO authors – well-prepared to navigate your way to all the many highlights that await you along the tour.

try a cup of their delicious hot chocolate which is famous throughout Italy! This vast piazza belongs to one of the most inspiring sights in Florence along with the **Palazzo Vecchio** → p. 37 and the **Loggia dei Lanzi** → p. 34.

Now take a stroll along the **Via dei Calzaiuoli**, take a left at the former granary and church adorned with sculptures ② **Orsanmichele** → p. 35, and wander across the **Piazza della Repubblica** where you can buy a foreign-language newspaper at the kiosk under the triumphal arch.



② Orsanmichele

