

Florence for Lovers



That love is all there is / Is all we know of Love.

Emily Dickinson

One who has had the good fortune to find love will do everything to
keep it alive because love does not grow old.

Nicola Abbagnano

There always exists a good reason to fall in love...

Florence is one of these.

Love lives spontaneously, and Florence is the ideal milieu where you might fix in your mind indelible remembrances taken from those exquisite moments when you viewed one of a kind breathtaking sights and architecture.

Yet, nearby those most remarkable places, spectacular in themselves, there are palaces and piazzas famous for having been the setting for some of the most celebrated love stories that Florence has known.

We offer to be your chaperon and lead you around the Romantic Florence. We will guide you through narrow alleys and gardens that within the course of centuries have served as a haven for fleeting passions and, strikingly so, have seen love stories that have lasted as long as History itself.

We will escort you, in all directions, encompassing a Florence you will want to rediscover through the eyes of Love--beneath the luminance of some of the world's most famous monuments.

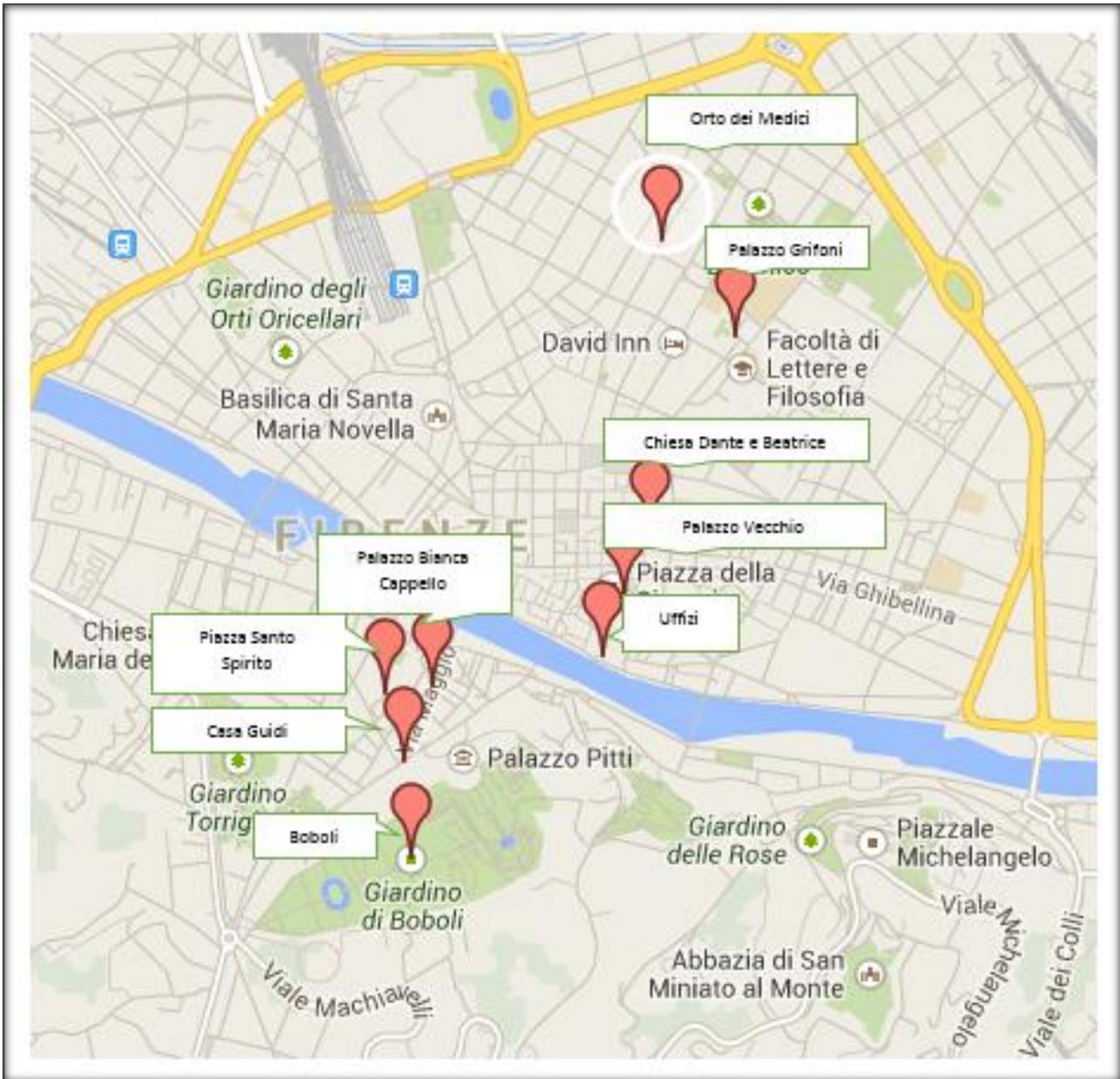
Let us now return to the present. We wish to suggest to you a backdrop for an aperitif, a stunning sunset, a panorama where you can rest and glance at a unique stage setting for Love and its overflowing emotions.

Since we sense that Love--as any sojourn--is composed of moments, we wish that every second you stay in Florence will be forever memorable.



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Florence for Lovers: Itinerary



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From Via San Gallo to Piazza Santissima Annunziata

Directions: From Via San Gallo, where the **Hotel Orto de' Medici** is located, turn left at the first side street (Via degli Arazzieri), and then continue on until you reach Piazza Santissima Annunziata.



Palazzo Budini Gattai (Palazzo Grifoni) in Piazza Santissima Annunziata, has been where a true to life story, in modern times, took place and which demonstrates the force of Love and its Eternity.

Looking at the facade of this majestic palace, you will notice that the left side of the window, on the first floor, is half-way open. If you return at another time, during the day or night, even in the years to come, you will find that window still open.

It is said that behind the aperture a young bride had waited a whole lifetime for the return of her beloved who had left to go to war--both of them hoping that in the future they could have together enjoyed a destiny of Love.

When the young bride passed away, her family reorganized her room and closed the window. Then strange things began to happen and inexplicable phenomenon peristed. The family were convinced to immediately open this perspective encompassing the city that the bride had gazed upon for all her life.

Not even death managed to shatter the hopes of the young bride, and the power of her feelings today still hover about the rooms of the palace.

The mystery of Love is vaster than the mystery of Death.

-- Oscar Wilde



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From Piazza Santissima Annunziata to Via Santa Margherita de' Cerchi

Directions: Leaving behind you Palazzo Budini Gattai, cross over Via dei Servi and go to the Piazza del Duomo. Go beyond it following Via dei Calzaiuoli, and then turn left into Via del Corso (the second side street on the left). Pause in the very small piazza that faces to your right.



It is on this spot that one of the most famous love stories of all times was immortalized in poetry by Dante. From his encounter with Beatrice at this location, Dante took inspiration and composed his poetry about her and perpetuated the intensity of their Love.



The **Chiesa di Santa Margherita de' Cerchi** is ensconced next to the age-old Palazzo dei Portinari--the family home of Beatrice and the Casa of Dante rebuilt in front of the Torre of Castagna.

It is said that Dante had taken notice of the young Beatrice who had often visited the church to pray for her loved ones who were buried there. Beatrice's tomb is also in this church.

The resting place of Beatrice is the destination of young lovers who come from all over the world--just as they arrive to also see the balcony of Juliet in Verona--to confirm their Love.

Lovers leave their entrance tickets on the tombstone of Beatrice seeking an intervention in favor of Love.

Within your eyes there sparkles such a smile, that
I thought I could touch with my own and thus
wend my way to the depths of my glory and my
paradise.

-- Dante Alighieri

That particular glance is not all...

Directions: Leaving behind the modest house of worship, take Via Dante Alighieri and then turn to the right into Via del Proconsolo continuing on until you arrive at Piazza San Firenze.

Climb up the flight of steps of the old court house, and then head to the right on the side closest to the Arno river. You will have to make an effort to find the exact location, but once you do, you will have a view both unique and almost unknown by most others. From this vantage point, you will, with just one sighting, catch a view of the crown of the Cupola del Brunelleschi, the Campanile della Badia, and the Fontana of Biancone in Piazza della Signoria.



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From Piazza San Firenze to Piazza della Signoria

Directions: From Piazza San Firenze, proceed along Via del Proconsolo in the direction of the Arno river. Then, turn to the right into Via Gondi. You will come upon Piazza della Signoria at an angle genuinely uncommon--at the back of Palazzo Vecchio.



Palazzo Vecchio, the emblem of the de' Medici family's power, is still today the seat of the Florentine government. In reality the palace, symbol of the city's political life, conceals a romantic heart within its confines: that of Cosimo de' Medici who fought for the hand of his beloved Eleonora da Toledo.



It is noted that the origin of their first contact was a purely business affair connected with the ambitions of Cosimo and the substantial dowry of Eleonora, the daughter of the powerful Viceré of Napoli. Keeping that viceroy together was a solid and tender relationship that bore the couple eleven children.

Cosimo commissioned Giorgio Vasari to design a series of constructions that would make him win the favor of the duchess. Because she was a great admirer of green open spaces, he also laid out, inside the palace, a winter garden called the Camera Verde. This room, also named for the color of its walls, was initially decorated with luxurious trimmings and furnishings with flowers made of fabrics of every style available.

What is this they call Love?
that through the eyes reaches the heart,
and which grows within a little space inside;
and then overflows?

-- Michelangelo Buonarroti

That certain look is not everything...

To arrive at Eleonora's rooms, one needs to cross over the balcony landing that allows one to see from on high the Salone of '500. Here you will discover a truly unusual view that permits you to take in this area in all its splendor and monumentality.



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From Piazza della Signoria to Piazzale degli Uffizi

Directions: Exit Palazzo Vecchio and go to the left side of the piazza where before your eyes you will take in the magnificent arches of the Piazzale of the Uffizi.



In the **Uffizi** you can admire the face of Love. That what the Florentines of 1400 held to have had the delicate contours of Simonetta Vespucci--the *sans pareille*.

In the Botticelli hall one can admire the features of a young lady more beautiful than the history of Florence itself. Her blond locks and deep grey eyes were characteristics not very common at the time.

The Primavera and the Venere that take life from the froth of the sea, possess the expression of this woman loved by Giuliano de' Medici--she who died in the full splendor of her extraordinary beauty at the tender age of twenty two.

You who would pass through my eyes to my heart
and torment my mind that rests in peace,
look at my life of agony,
that Love has till now destroyed.

-- Guido Cavalcanti

Perhaps not everyone knows...

Simonetta Vespucci is buried in the Church of Ognissanti next to Giuliano de' Medici and protected by the devotion of Sandro Botticelli who asked to be buried at their feet.

At whatever hour you wish to visit the church, be sure to walk through the entire nave. At the left of the transept, you will be surprised to be able to admire the Crucifix of Giotto that has recently undergone an elaborate restoration.



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And for a pleasant stopover...

Leave some time for yourself.

*Take in the history that you are now living,
just as you had done in front of the places
where are the **most famous Loves**.*

*These have been able to go beyond the
confines of Time,
because they have been known to be unique
and as such were lived.*

*Is it not so that you have had the same
opportunity?*

Before crossing over Ponte Vecchio

*and continuing on with your memorable stroll,
pause at Lungaro Corsini.*

*Here, at the Caffé Rivalta, enjoy an aperitif
'alla fiorentina',*

*or even lean on the parapet of the Arno river
and let your love flow*

as long as the Arno has.

Let yourself be stimulated by a Tuscan sunset...



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From Piazzale of the Uffizi to Via Maggio

Directions: From the exit of the Uffizi continue on until you reach Lungarno degli Acciaiuoli. Then proceed to the right until you find Ponte Vecchio on your left. Cross over it and enter Borgo San Jacopo at the right. After, turn to the left into Via Maggio.



Oltrarno, as the Florentines prefer to call this picturesque neighborhood, has managed to conserve the majority of its craftsmen's and craftswomen's ateliers. You will find here a specially mustered atmosphere.

Yes, you will come across tourists here. Yet, they are not noticeable.



In the 1400s, so as to escape from the overcrowding of the center of Florence, many noblepersons began to construct sumptuous villas and palaces in this area that was beyond the walls of the city.

Via Maggio is a contraction of Via Maggiore--so-called because it represented the main entrance way to the city for foreigners arriving from Rome.

Here, in the very heart of the Oltrarno, at number 26, one might come across the

Palazzo di Bianca Cappello so loved by Francesco I de' Medici.

The structure is, in fact, close to Palazzo Pitti, once the private residence of the Medici after they had abandoned Palazzo Vecchio.

It is easy to recognize it from its grotesque decorations that adorn the facade of the building. The palace had been built for the clandestine love of Francesco and Bianca--before the two could officially join hands in matrimony.

Today the palace houses the archives of the Gabinetto Vieusseux.

The measure of Love is to love without measuring.

-- Sant'Agostino



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From Via Maggio to Piazza Santo Spirito

Directions: Go along Via Maggio and turn right into Via dei Michelozzi. From this point, you can easily find Piazza Santo Spirito.



Piazza Santo Spirito was the "Theatre of Love" that was "enacted" by Dianora de' Bardi and Ippolito Buontalenti, and as such, we reveal to you the happy ending.

The young couple had to meet clandestinely in order to overcome the disapproval of their relationship by their respective families who both did not find in each other an iota of fondness. When Ippolito risked being prosecuted by the law after being unjustly exchanged for a thief during one of his nights out, Dianora stood up for Ippolito taking all the blame from him.

When confronted with this extraordinary show of affection that Dianora exhibited, the entire Florentine population came to the aid of the two lovers finally convincing the two families to allow them to marry.

Love conquers all. Even we surrender to Love.

-- Virgilio

Why not pause for a pleasant intermission...

Piazza Santo Spirito is the ideal location to stop for a coffee or an aperitif.

The cafes' trivets that surround this characteristic piazza host artists to a degree more than in any other place within the city of Florence. The atmosphere is low-key and far from the "maddening crowds" of tourists populating the center of the city.

On the piazza is the Church of Santo Spirito which was designed by maestro Brunelleschi. Feast your eyes on the harmonic contours and the stateliness of the structure.



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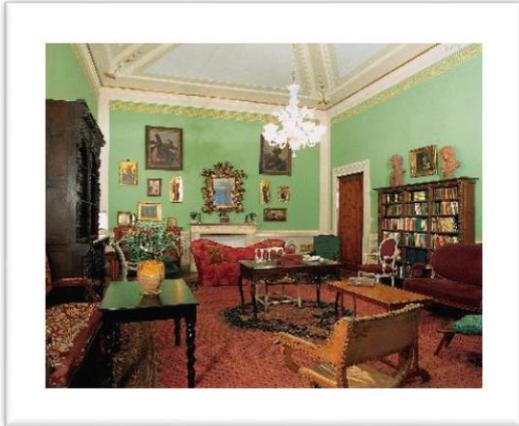
Emily Dickinson

From Piazza Santo Spirito to Piazza San Felice

Directions: Leaving the Basilica of Santo Spirito behind you, head for the rear of the piazza and turn right into Via delle Caldaie. Then make a sharp left turn into Via Mazzetta until you arrive at Piazza San Felice.



Still, Love in Florence does not end with the Renaissance.



In 1847, on the run from England, the English poets Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett reached Florence.

After a secret headlong rush into matrimony in England--a union violently opposed by Elizabeth's father--the two chose Florence to live their lives together.

In the city they enjoyed the symbol of true liberty, and here the two poets composed some of their most memorable verses.

It was Elizabeth herself who defined **Casa Guidi**, their apartment in Piazza San Felice, intended to mean a common family name, as the just right atmosphere that she wished would reign within it.

Today the house is open to the public through the auspices of the Landmark Trust and Eton College. The furnishings of the era maintain the cosiness of a domestic residence far from the coolness of a museum.

If you should love me, do so for no other reason than Love.
-- Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Maybe not all know that...

The Browning couple selected San Frediano overjoyed with the pulsating vibrancy of the craft shops that animate the neighborhood even today. A crafts industry began to develop in the 1400s when the Medici and other noble Florentine families stimulated artists to create magnificent works of art for their luxurious palaces and residences. Carvers and etchers, goldsmiths, mosaicists, smithies, and silversmiths collaborated to create stunning decorative pieces and works of art that have lasted to this day and have made the Florentine culture famous throughout the world.



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From Piazza San Felice to Giardino dei Boboli

Directions: From Piazza San Felice it will be enough for you to go a few metres in the direction of the Arno river in order to find, on the left, the entrance to Palazzo Pitti and the monumental Boboli Gardens.



Cosimo's love for Eleonora was so intense that he erected **Giardino di Boboli**, giving precise instructions: he wanted a garden whose beauty and majesty would be equal to that of Eleonora's.



The Boboli Gardens is today one of the admirable examples of an Italian garden, and is famous all over the world. It is, at the same time, a veritable open-air vast museum.

Stroll along its pathways and you will discover one surprise after the other: underground caves, stage-set fountains, ponds, and statues that originated in Roman times. The Boboli Gardens were brought to life to astound, to please, and to bring joy to the dukes and duchesses and their guests.

Many of the magical installations created by Buontalenti and the water games that resulted from a spectacular architecture,

are not active today.

Pass through the pathways decorated with holm-oaks and experience an extremely romantic moment-- every season of the year.

~~Between our soul and our body there are many tiny
windows. From them, if they are open, pass
emotions. If they are half-closed, they barely
seep through. Only love can fling them open,
and suddenly, as if by a gust of wind.~~

Susanna Tamaro



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And for a pleasant stop off...

May we suggest that you top off your itinerary, that we advised you to take, with a breathtaking view upon Ponte Vecchio-- holding an aperitif from the Hotel Continentale bar? The night light and the sparkling reflections on the Arno river will envelop you in an emotional backdrop.

Because Love needs to fix one's gaze upon those future projects that are in wait. To imagine happiness, to be able to live in the present.

That is why we need panoramas and perspectives of Beauty.



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