

Best things to see in Florence in two days

Piazza del Duomo

Piazza del Duomo is located in the heart of the historic center of Florence. It is one of the most visited places in Europe and the world and in Florence, the most visited area of the city. The square contains the Florence Cathedral with the Cupola del Brunelleschi, the Giotto's Campanile, the Florence Baptistery, the Loggia del Bigallo, the Opera del Duomo Museum, and the Arcivescovile and Canonici's palace. The west zone of this square is called Piazza San Giovanni.



Duomo

The Cattedrale di Santa Maria del Fiore is the main church of Florence. Il Duomo di Firenze, as it is ordinarily called, was begun in 1296 in the Gothic style and completed structurally in 1436 with the dome engineered by Filippo Brunelleschi. The exterior of the basilica is faced with polychrome marble panels in various shades of green and pink bordered by white. The cathedral complex includes the Baptistery and Giotto's Campanile. These three buildings are part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site covering the historic centre of Florence. The basilica is one of Italy's largest churches, and until development of new structural materials in the modern era, the dome was the largest in the world. It remains the largest brick dome ever constructed.



Battistero

The Florence Baptistery is one of the oldest buildings in the city, constructed between 1059 and 1128 in the Florentine Romanesque style. The Baptistery is renowned for its three sets of artistically important bronze doors with relief sculptures. The south doors were created by Andrea Pisano and the north and east doors by Lorenzo Ghiberti. The east doors were dubbed by Michelangelo the Gates of Paradise. The Italian poet Dante and many other notable Renaissance figures, including members of the Medici family, were baptized in this baptistry.



Campanile di Giotto

Giotto's Campanile is a free-standing campanile that is part of the complex of buildings that make up Florence Cathedral on the Piazza del Duomo in Florence. Standing adjacent to the Basilica of Santa Maria del Fiore and the Baptistery of St. John, the tower is one of the showpieces of Florentine Gothic architecture with its design by Giotto, its rich sculptural decorations and its polychrome marble encrustations. The slender structure is square in plan with 47.41 ft sides. It is 277.9 ft tall and has polygonal buttresses at each corner. The tower is divided into five stages.



Piazza della Signoria

Piazza della Signoria is an L-shaped square in front of the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence. It is the main point of the origin and history of the Florentine Republic and still maintains its reputation as the political focus of the city. The sculptures in Piazza della Signoria bristle with political connotations, many of which are fiercely contradictory. The David (the original is in the Galleria dell'Accademia) by Michelangelo was placed outside the Palazzo Vecchio as a symbol of the Republic's defiance of the tyrannical Medici. Bandinelli's Hercules and Cacus (1534) to the right of the David was appropriated by the Medici to show their physical power after their return from exile. The Nettuno by Ammannati celebrates the Medici's maritime ambitions and Giambologna's equestrian statue of Duke Cosimo I (1595) is an elegant portrait of the man who brought all of Tuscany under Medici military rule.



Palazzo Vecchio

Is time travel possible? At Palazzo Vecchio it is, with a trip back into history to three eras. Palazzo Vecchio offers Roman ruins, a Medieval fortress and amazing Renaissance chambers and paintings. A microcosm where art and history have been indissolubly bound for centuries. Palazzo Vecchio is the main symbol of civil power for the city of Florence.



La Galleria degli Uffizi

Occupying the top floor of the U-shaped Palazzo degli Uffizi along the banks of the Arno River, the Uffizi Gallery was Europe's first modern museum, created by the Medici family at the end of the 16th century. Today, the museum is any art lover's dream: it still displays the family's prominent art collection, which includes such masterpieces as Botticelli's "Birth of Venus," Raphael's "Madonna of the Goldfinch" and Titian's "Venus of Urbino."



Ponte Vecchio

An Everlasting Symbol of Florence, built very close to the Roman crossing, the Ponte Vecchio, or Old Bridge, was the only bridge across the Arno in Florence until 1218. The current bridge was rebuilt after a flood in 1345. During World War II it was the only bridge across the Arno that the fleeing Germans did not destroy. Instead they blocked access by demolishing the medieval buildings on each side. On November 4, 1966, the bridge miraculously withstood the tremendous weight of water and silt when the Arno once again burst its banks.

There have been shops on Ponte Vecchio since the 13th century. By night, the wooden shutters of the shops create a look like suitcases and wooden chests, making it a very suggestive route to take for an evening passeggiata, or stroll. Ponte Vecchio is a very romantic spot in Florence, with its great views over the river and of the bridge itself.



Palazzo Pitti

If you're headed to Oltrarno for a stroll through the Boboli Gardens, it's worth it to take some time to tour the Palazzo Pitti (Pitti Palace) as well. This former Renaissance residence is now home to Florence's most extensive grouping of museums. The most notable of the Pitti's galleries is the Galleria Palatina, which – with its impressive collection of works by Raphael, Titian and Rubens – is second in prestige only to the Uffizi Gallery.



Giardino di Boboli

Originally, these beautiful gardens belonged to the Boboli Family; it wasn't until the late 18th century that the gates opened to the public. Today, Boboli Gardens (located in the Oltrarno) offers sanctuary from the hustle and bustle of the tourist-trodden city center. While you stroll through this extensive green, keep your eyes peeled for the numerous sculptures strategically placed along the paths, like Giambologna's Bathing Venus. Also swing by the Isolotto, a large fountain located at the southwestern end of the park. Many recent travelers said this is a great place to spend an afternoon outdoors, noting the excellent landscaping, museums and, of course, the picturesque views of the city below.



Santo Spirito

If after the Boboli gardens you're not too tired, head to the nearby Piazza Santo Spirito with its Church of Santo Spirito. Built by Brunelleschi, the church stands tall over the square with its simple and yellow facade but hides many artistic treasures inside. There are several restaurants and cafes around the square and in the streets nearby that offer excellent Tuscan dishes and wines for you to enjoy your stay in Florence.



Basilica di San Lorenzo

The Basilica di San Lorenzo is one of the largest churches of Florence, situated at the centre of the city's main market district, and the burial place of all the principal members of the Medici family. It is one of several churches that claim to be the oldest in Florence; when it was consecrated in 393 it stood outside the city walls. For three hundred years it was the city's cathedral. San Lorenzo was also the parish church of the Medici family. The church is part of a larger monastic complex that contains other important architectural and artistic works: the Old Sacristy by Brunelleschi, with interior decoration and sculpture by Donatello; the Laurentian Library by Michelangelo; the New Sacristy based on Michelangelo's designs; and the Medici Chapels by Matteo Nigetti.



Santa Maria Novella

Santa Maria Novella is a church situated just across from the main railway station named after it. Chronologically, it is the first great basilica in Florence, and is the city's principal Dominican church. The church, the adjoining cloister, and chapter house contain a multiplicity of art treasures and funerary monuments. Especially famous are frescoes by masters of Gothic and early Renaissance. They were financed by the most important Florentine families, who ensured themselves funerary chapels on consecrated ground.



La Galleria dell'Accademia

Located in the heart of the city, the Accademia Gallery hosts examples of paintings and sculptures by the great 14th and 15th century masters who made Florence the capital of art. The Accademia houses Michelangelo's David, easily the most famous sculpture in the world and one of the most recognized works of Renaissance sculpture, a symbol of both strength and youthful human beauty. Once inside, you'll also see Michelangelo's unfinished and powerful Prisoners, along with works by Perugino, Giambologna, Botticelli and Alessandro Allori, paintings between the 200's and 500's and plaster cast collections respectively done by Lorenzo Bartolini and Luigi Pampaloni, and a collection of Russian Icons..



Chiesa di Santa Croce

Santa Croce is the burial place for the great and good in Florence. Michelangelo is buried in Santa Croce, as are Rossini, Machiavelli, and the Pisan-born Galileo Galilei, who was tried by the Inquisition and was not allowed a Christian burial until 1737, 95 years after his death. There is also a memorial to Dante, but his sarcophagus is empty (he is actually buried in Ravenna as he was exiled from Florence). There is an immense artistic wealth in Santa Croce; frescoes (1380) by Gaddi in the Cappella Maggiore tell the story of the holy cross, "santa croce", and beautiful frescoes by Giotto in the Bardi and Peruzzi Chapels show scenes from the life of St. Francis and St. John the Evangelist. An unusual relief, the Annunciation, in gilded limestone by Donatello decorates the south nave wall. Don't miss the memorial to the 19th century playwright Giovanni Battista Niccolini to the left of the entrance said to be been the inspiration for the Statue of Liberty.



Piazzale Michelangelo

If you want to enjoy a marvelous view over the city at sunset, we recommend heading to Piazzale Michelangelo, a square overlooking the city from the first hill in the Oltrarno. You'll enjoy viewing and identifying all of the places you've visited all over Florence.

