



## APARTMENTS FLORENCE

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## A day at Ponte Vecchio #florencetoptip

Enjoy a full day of explorations in the Ponte Vecchio area, guided by Apartments Florence's Top Tips to live Florence like a local! Share your experience on Facebook or Instagram with [#florencetoptip](#) and [#apartmentsflorence](#)!



*Shopping area*



*History and curiosities*



*Breakfast*



*Night life*



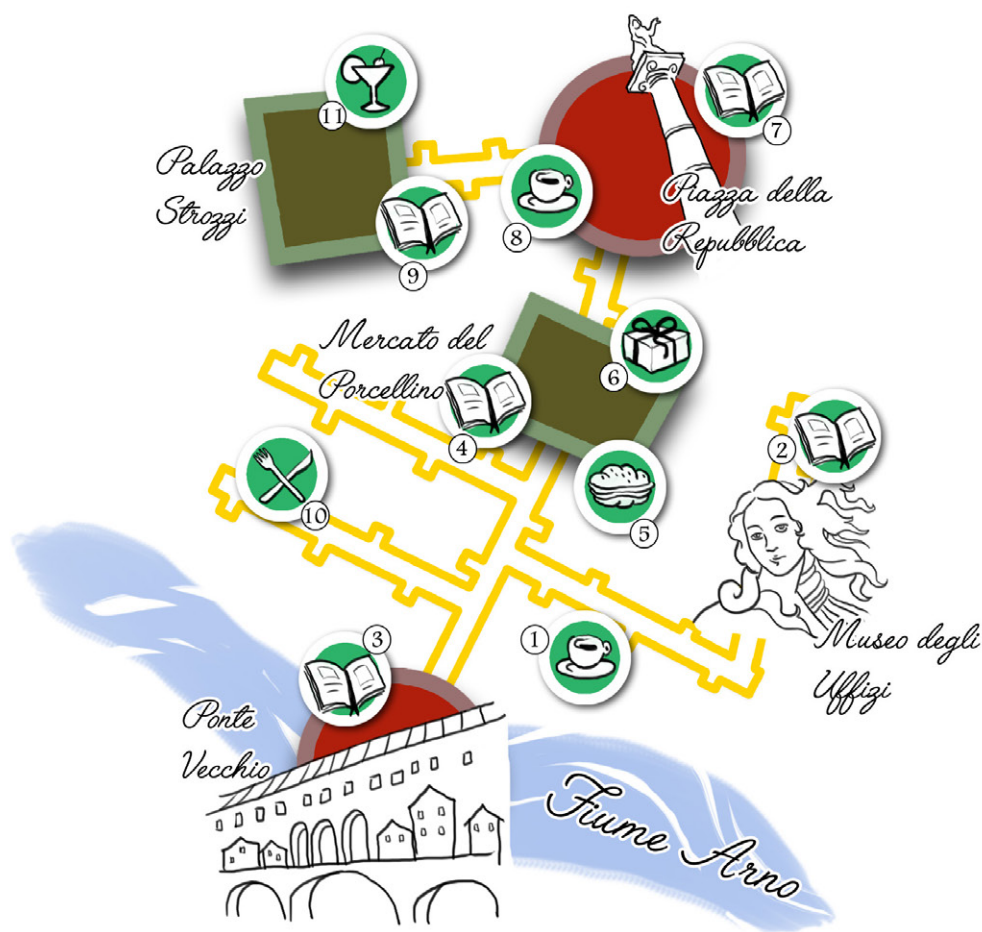
*Restaurant*

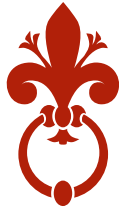


*View*



*Quick lunch*





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### Starting Point: Piazza del Pesce

A proper breakfast in some cases can make your day, so that's why you should take it seriously, as all Italians do. Our top pick for the Ponte Vecchio area is the lovely **Caffè delle Carrozze, in Piazza del Pesce ①** – right in front of Ponte Vecchio, but in a quiet and rather detached area. This café is an institution for artisanal gelato and offers panini, pizza, pastries and exceptionally good coffee. You can **sit outside in the patio** and watch people stroll on and off Ponte Vecchio and just relax.

Piazza del Pesce is so called (Fish Square) because it was originally **home to the local fresh fish market** – and to the Loggia del Pesce, now located in Piazza dei Ciompi – when the Arno river was cleaner and populated by many aquatic species.

In front of Piazza del Pesce you'll certainly notice a **peculiar architectural structure** made of lodges and overhead structures: it's the **Vasarian Corridor** (Corridoio Vasariano). Built by Vasari in 1565 by order of Cosimo II de' Medici, the Corridor was intended as a **secret and protected passage for the Medici family** to be able to move through the city without being out in the open. The Corridoio links Palazzo Vecchio, The Uffizi, Ponte Vecchio, Santa Felicità's Church (a small window in the Corridor allowed the Medici to attend the Mass unseen) and ends right into Palazzo Pitti, home to the Medici family. The Corridor is now a days open for visitors only upon request, and only a few times a year, and it hosts a collection of portraits and paintings as part of the Uffizi Gallery.

### The Uffizi Gallery

Yes, the **Uffizi ②**. One of the most famous and prestigious museums in the world, enshrining some of the **most important artworks and celebrated master pieces of Art history and Renaissance**. To talk about all the priceless, stunning collections, halls, statues

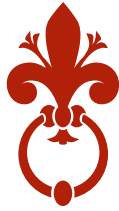


Alessandro will make you a great pizza from scratch at Caffè delle Carrozze!



A detail of the Vasarian Corridor





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and paintings would require a separate guide, so we'd rather spend a few words on some of its **less known facts and curiosities**.

Before the whole complex was built, that **same area** was rather **in famously known as a place of debauchery**, filled with pleasure houses and other similar locations. The Florentines teasingly **renamed the neighbourhood "Baldracca"** (prostitute), as it was the name of one of the many brothels in the area.

The building hosting the Gallery was commissioned by Cosimo I in 1560 to Giorgio Vasari, and it was home to the **Judiciary Offices and the Arts and Trades Offices** (Offices = Uffici in Italian, turned into Uffizi) until **Francesco I de' Medici decided to turn the second floor into his personal museum** and, later on, Ferdinando I began opening it to the public upon request: the first modern museum in Europe was born.

Nowadays the Uffizi Gallery is the **most visited museum in Italy**, with almost 2 million visitors per year, and for a reason: once in a lifetime everyone should get the chance to see for himself the stunning artworks by **Italian Masters** such as Giotto, Cimabue, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Raffaello, Botticelli, Caravaggio, Tiziano... Don't hesitate and dive in this world of marble, frescoes and paintings, where the very rooms and halls hosting the museum are pieces of art and beauty themselves.

Also, enjoy the **view from the rooftop café's terrace** and from the windowed hallways: a breathtaking panorama of Florence's skyline!

### Dive in: Ponte Vecchio and the surroundings

Now, let's talk about **Ponte Vecchio ③**, one of the most famous landmarks in Florence. This bridge has very ancient origins, but its actual shape and size dates back to 1345, when it was re-built after the 1333 flood,

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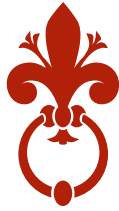


Street artists and mimes perform their act under the Uffizi's Loggias



Morning training at I Canottieri Club, with a unique view of Ponte Vecchio





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presumably by Taddeo Gaddi.

Now you see Ponte Vecchio filled with goldsmiths and jewelers, but bare in mind that **originally only butchers and greengrocers had their shops there**, finding it easy to dispose of the trash by dumping it into the Arno.

With the Vasarian Corridor construction, though, having butchers and “dirty” businesses right under their windows was not acceptable for the Medici family, so Ferdinando ordered that the shops on the bridge were assigned to goldsmiths and jewelers – a much more noble activity in the eyes of the aristocracy.

The **current appearances of Ponte Vecchio** are to be credited to those butchers, though, as it was them who, in need of space for business, started gradually adding more and more rooms and new structures projecting onto the river, giving this bridge his unusual and famous structure.

Reaching the center of the bridge, take the time to **admire the panorama from both sides of the central terraces**.

If you look at Ponte Vecchio from the Lungarni, **on the right side of the Corridor you'll notice three larger windows**, different from the tiny Renaissance ones punctuating the whole path of the hallway. These windows were enlarged in 1939 on Mussolini's orders, in occasion of **Hitler's visit to Florence**: Mussolini wanted to be sure the Führer had a nice view overlooking the city and the Arno river.

Legend has it, it was precisely during this visit that Hitler **fell completely in love with Florence**, so much so that in 1944, when the city was putting up resistance against the Nazi occupation and the SS finally had to retreat, Ponte Vecchio was the only one spared from German bombings, which completely destroyed many streets and buildings in the surroundings. Actually, later on we learned that **the true guardian angel for Ponte Vecchio**

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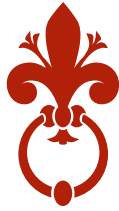


Lovers and couples use to place locks on Ponte Vecchio's fences, hoping their love will last forever



Ponte Vecchio kissed by the sun





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was the German ambassador in Florence, **Gerhard Wolf**.

Ponte Vecchio also **used to have four watchtowers**, two for each side. Today only one remains, the Mannelli Tower on the Oltrarno side. Vasari disposed for the tower to be dismantled for the construction of the Corridor, but the **Mannelli family** strenuously opposed to the decision and Vasari had to build the Corridor around the tower, sparing their building. Try to imagine Cosimo I's wrath against the Mannelli...

After exploring Ponte Vecchio, our suggestion is to take a walk in the quiet and characteristic streets of **Borgo Santissimi Apostoli** and **Viadelle Terme**. These two streets have preserved an authentic atmosphere and they provide for a moment of calm and relax after diving into the crowds surrounding Ponte Vecchio and the commercial street of Por Santa Maria.

### Lunch Break: Mercato del Porcellino

Craving some **good Florentine food**? If you are not scared of trying new things – and if you're not a vegetarian! – head on to the **Porcellino Market** ④ down the street from Ponte Vecchio, in direction of Piazza della Repubblica.

This Market is set under the Loggia since 1547, when it hosted jewelers and silk and precious fabrics' traders. Nowadays the main products sold here are leather goods, Florentine paper crafts and scarves.

This market's real name was "Mercato Nuovo" (New Market), but the addition of a certain fountain in 1640 quickly changed it into Mercato del Porcellino.

Have you seen it, yet? On the left side of the Loggia there is a **bronze statue of a Wild Boar**, and its nose is particularly shiny! Why? According to tradition, touching the Porcellino's nose and putting a coin in his mouth **will bring good luck**, but only if the coin falls into the grate!

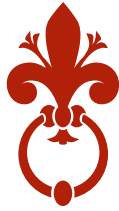


Touch the Porcellino's nose, for good luck!



Try a Lampredotto sandwich here, you won't regret it!





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After gathering some good omens, let's fill our bellies. Right next to the Porcellino you'll find a kiosk selling the **very best Lampredotto in Florence ⑤**!

What is Lampredotto? You really want to know? Lampredotto is a particular kind of meat, cow meat precisely, coming from one of the **cow's four stomachs**. Yeah, right.

But just have a bite from a sandwich or get a stew portion, with some green sauce or a spicy one, and you will be able to say you really tasted the most typical Florentine dish. If Lampredotto is not your thing, head back to Borgo Santissimi Apostoli and have a tasty lunch at **Mangiafoco bistrò**.

### Afternoon: Shopping in the "Ghetto"

Moving on from the Porcellino's Market, you'll step foot in a **very elegant shopping area ⑥**, the one surrounding **Piazza della Repubblica ⑦**.

This square wasn't always as fancy and refined looking as you see it today. Originally, since 1500, this **was Florence's Ghetto**, wanted by Cosimo I.

The only monument to the ancient times of this area is the **Colonna dell'Abbondanza** (Abundance Column), the tall monument standing on the right side of the Piazza. The ghetto was a **unique mixture of architectures**, built up in the centuries, featuring medieval towers, workshops, but also renaissance loggias and palaces, and it was the city's most important center for trades, with many markets and shops. Until 1885, when **Florence was declared Capital of Italy**, and it was decided to renew large areas of the city's ancient quarters to better fit the elegance and "decency" standards expected from a country's Capital.

So the **Ghetto was completely razed to the ground**, to make space for fancy palaces, offices, shiny new shops and cafès, frequented by artists and intellectuals of the XIX century.

**That elegant facade still stands** nowadays: Piazza della

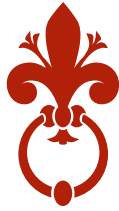


Bring home a unique souvenir: a Florentine tailored suit by Eredi Charini, both old fashioned and modern boutique just beside the Porcellino Market



Colorful details in Borgo Santissimi Apostoli





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Repubblica hosts **many historical cafès** and restaurants – not cheap, but surely worth a visit: for example, have a coffee at **Le Giubbe Rosse ⑧**; you'll get a better sense of what it was like to **enter a Florentine bar in 1920** and sit down to talk about art, literature and politics.

Under the loggias on the side of the Piazza **every Thursday you'll find the flowers' market**: colors, scents and exotic plants all over the place!

**Shopping opportunities are all around** you: famous brands, chain companies and the maximall La Rinascente offer a wide choice of clothing, accessories and souvenirs. On the **rooftop terrace of La Rinascente** you'll find anice caffè and you will be able to admire Florence from up high!

Piazza della Repubblica often also displays **street artists of many kinds**, from musiciansto dancers and puppet shows.

To end your afternoon explorations, stroll through the "Arc du Triomphe" and find **Palazzo Strozzi ⑨**. This Palace, once home to the famous Strozzi family, is now a **center of art and culture**, hosting different and finely curated exhibitions every year. **La Strozgina**, smaller structure inside Palazzo Strozzi, is one of the main centers for **contemporary art** and performances in Florence.

### Evening and Nightlife

The area surrounding Ponte Vecchio and Piazza della Repubblica **may seem really touristic** and kind of "fake", but look closely and you'll certainly find **hidden, typical places** to have a nice dinner.

Here are our suggestions for the area!

If you're looking for a **gourmet, starred restaurant L'Ora D'aria**, in Via de' Georgofili (sadly known for being the location of a tragic bomb attack perpetrated by the mafia in 1993) is the place for you: fancy selection of dishes and top choice wines, combined with and award winning chef will not disappoint.

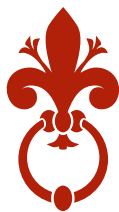
For a **more rustic and home-feeling** atmosphere, look



Inside Palazzo Strozzi



Piazza della Repubblica's old fashioned carousel



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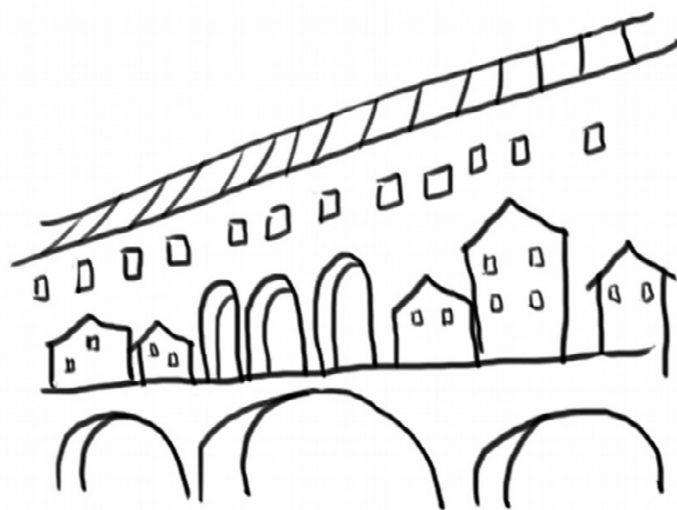
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for **Cacio Vino Trallallà ⑩**, in Borgo SS. Apostoli: tiny and cozy, this small restaurant has a shortlist of selected dishes, always fresh and originally prepared – try it out and be amazed!

The nightlife scene is animated by many small clubs in the area. The **Old Stove Pub**, right behind Piazza della Repubblica, offers a nice and comfy environment and sometimes live music nights.

If you fancy a movie, **Odeon Cinema ⑪** is the place to go: weekly **original sound screenings** (with Italian subs) and periodical film festivals create a very lively cultural atmosphere around this cinema.

The **adjoining Bistrot** offers drinks and aperitivo, for a full night at the movies.







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### Practical Informations

#### Uffizi

Tuesday – Sunday: 8.15 – 18.50

Online bookings: [www.polomuseale.firenze.it](http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it)

#### Corridoio Vasariano

Open on occasion for special tours, but if you wish to schedule a visit you can try contacting [segreteria@polomuseale.firenze.it](mailto:segreteria@polomuseale.firenze.it), tel. 055 2388621-625

#### Palazzo Strozzi

Every day 10.00 – 20.00

Thursday 10.00 – 23.00

#### Odeon Cinema

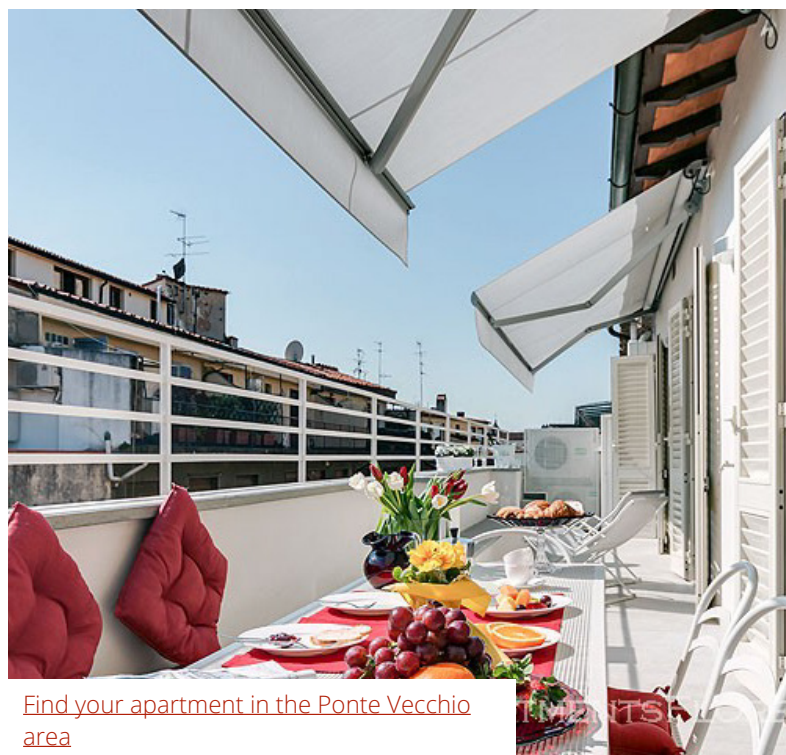
Check the daily program on <http://www.odeonfirenze.com/>

#### Mercato del Porcellino

Every day 9.00 – 18.30

#### Seasonal events and markets

Every Thursday Piazza della Repubblica hosts the fresh flowers' market. On occasion the square also becomes the stage for a few festivals, concerts or performances in town.



[Find your apartment in the Ponte Vecchio area](#)

NB: These informations are provided by Apartments Florence according to the informations found on the official websites of the museums, venues and monuments, but we cannot be held responsible for changes or errors in opening hours or conditions. It's always best to double check timetables and prices before you book a visit or arrange an activity.

#### Credits:

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