



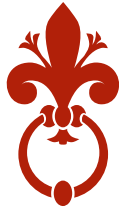
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A day in Santa
Maria Novella
#florencetoptip

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





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Starting point: Via dei Fossi

Our day in Santa Maria Novella will start from via dei Fossi, a small street connecting the square to Piazza Goldoni and the Arno River.

This lovely street holds a few hidden gems: for starters, there are a lot of antique shops, plus a few restaurants and two of our favorite spots in Florence. The first one is **Todo Modo ①**, a newly opened bookshop where we suggest you stop for breakfast. Yes, Todo Modo has a wonderful charming café where you can find fresh pastries, cakes, coffee and foamy cappuccinos, but also salty treats and lunch break snacks. Also, if you're looking for a good reading, just ask **Pietro for some suggestions** and he'll be happy to share his knowledge when it comes to novels, essays and comic books. On your way out from the bookstore, you'll notice a small vintage shop right in front of you: it's **Epoca, vintage clothing** institution in Florence thanks to **Otello** and his great taste in fashion and style! Stop by to explore the latest outfits and accessories he found!

If you're **missing good old American coffee** or you're willing to try one to mix it up a little, a nice breakfast alternative is Arnold's Coffee, a new addition to the square's flair, which soon conquered all – Florentines and tourists. Its wide choice of coffees, lattes and cakes, muffins etc. make it a very nice place to start off your day. After breakfast it's time to explore around!

Dive in: Piazza Santa Maria Novella

Piazza Santa Maria Novella ② was literally "opened" by dismantling the buildings surrounding the ancient Santa Maria delle Vigne's convent, in the late 1200 and rapidly became a vibrant core of life and events in Florence. Due to its large size, the Piazza used to host a variety of fairs and was perfect to play sports. Cosimo I decided to hold the **Palio dei Cocchi** (a Chariot Race, evocative of the ancient Roman times) in Santa Maria Novella in the late 1500 and Florentines used to play ball or Calcio Fiorentino here.



Pietro will welcome you at Todo Modo Bookshop and give advice for your reading!



Otello owns the stylish vintage shop Epoca



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The Church was built on the pre-existing Dominican convent and the construction process lasted centuries, until the facade was completed, by Leon Battista Alberti, in 1470.

In [Via degli Aveli](#), alongside the right side of the Church you'll notice the characteristic sequence of marble niches or Archosolium. These structures were called "Aveli" and were mainly used as burial sites for important and distinguished members of the Florentine community. Of course, being these tombs almost "en plein air", the corpses soon began to smell very bad, hence the Florentine way of saying "[puzzare come un avello](#)" (to stink like an avello). Boccaccio set one of the Decameron's stories inside one of these graves!

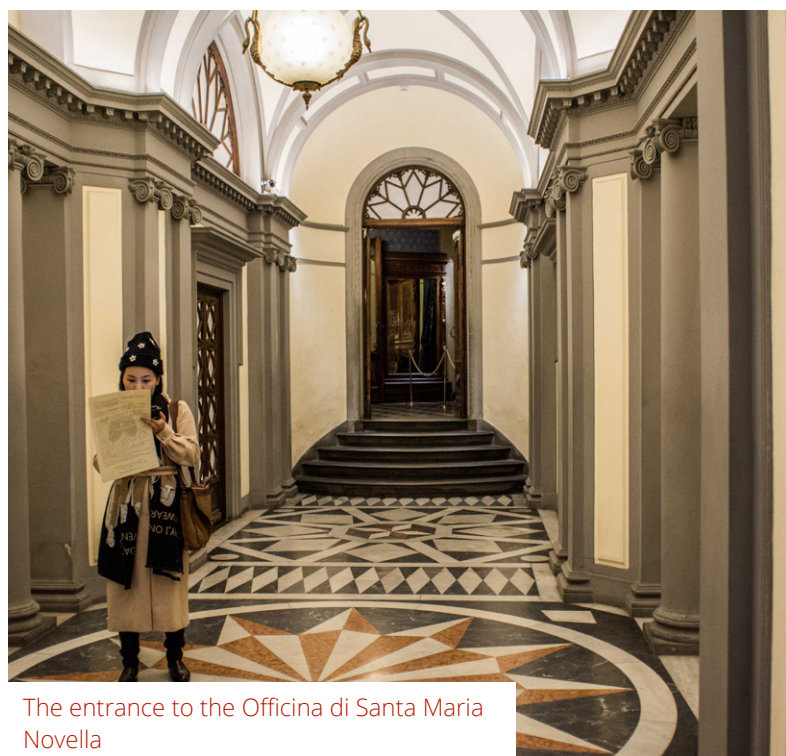
Moving on, it's time to enter the beautiful church. Inside, you'll find an endless treasure of art works, paintings, statues, frescoes by a few of the most important Italian masters: [Giotto \(Crucifix\)](#), [Vasari](#), [Ghirlandaio](#), [Masaccio](#) (the magnificent perspective study that is the Trinity)... But aside from big names and stunning artworks, this church is permeated by a rather fascinating atmosphere, very airy, non-oppressive and somewhat serene. Maybe you'll get what Michelangelo himself was feeling while walking inside this Basilica: he fell so in love with Santa Maria Novella that he even called it "his bride".

The Church communicates directly with the Museum, set in the ancient Dominican convent, which features three monumental cloisters and frescoed chapels. When you feel you've seen it all and you're happy and content with your daily dose of art and history, let us guide you in [another fabulous place](#) nearby: the [Officina Farmaceutica Santa Maria Novella ③](#), in Via della Scala. This was the ancient convent's infirmary and pharmacy, managed by the apothecary monks and later – in 1600 – opened to the public. Nowadays the Officina is managed by a private company, but with great respect and consideration for its historical past and tradition. Inside its magnificent halls you'll find [ancient remedies and herbs alongside with delicious perfumes](#), colognes, scented candles and modern hair

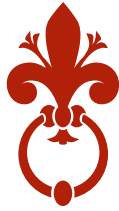
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People chatting next to a souvenir kiosk in Piazza Santa Maria Novella



The entrance to the Officina di Santa Maria Novella



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and skin products. There is also a charming tea room, which becomes magical during Christmas time, where you can sit down and have a nice hot cup of tea or tisana (herbal tea) and enjoy a tasty piece of cake. After a dive into the most amazing mix of scents and natural remedies, a short walk across the Piazza will take you to the brand new **Museo Novecento**: one of the few places in Florence to showcase and host selected modern and **contemporary art** pieces, with a special focus on the relationship between Florence and Florentine artists and the world. You'll find video installation, sculptures, paintings, photographs and all sorts of artworks, along with temporary exhibitions changing during the year. A special mention goes to the last of the Museum's installations: the video montage tribute to Florence in the history of cinema.

This museum is particularly **indicated also for children**, as it hosts a variety of events and workshops dedicated to kids in the weekends. Another important National museum is set right next to Museo Novecento: the **Museo Nazionale Alinari della Fotografia**. A historical archive and museum containing the photographs that made history, collected by the Alinari brothers in the course of centuries and now displayed for everyone to enjoy.

Lunch Break: panini or street food?

The area surrounding Santa Maria Novella is most known for its **multicultural background**: and you'll certainly notice the many diverse souls coexisting in these streets. It will not be unusual to see a traditional Tuscan Osteria right next to a Bangladesh mini-market or an Indian take away next to a very Italian bar. This **melting pot** is what makes Santa Maria Novella one of the most lively and culturally interesting places in Florence.

The lunch experience, thus, is bound to be exotic and diversified, if you're into spicy, foreign street food such as Kebab, Felafel, Tandoori chicken, Chinese take away and so on. But we, as Florentines, feel like recommending two slightly more traditional places in

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One of the many halls at Museo Novecento



A colourful corner next to Via dell'Albero



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the area.

The first is **La Boite ④**, nice panini place in Via Palazzuolo, just off Via della Scala: small and welcoming bistro, ideal for a nice schiacciata or a gourmet cheese and cold cuts platter with a glass of wine! The second suggestion is a bit more succulent and gluttonous: the **Antica Friggitoria di Via dell'Albero** brings back to life the tradition of the Friggitorie (kingdoms of fried foodies) that used to dot the streets of Florence. This one is the last standing old fashioned Friggitoria, plus is managed by Neapolitan guys so great Pizza meets Coccoli (fried dough) and fries... Well, just for today... Fry away!

Afternoon: there's shopping, and then there's luxury shopping

With a full belly it's time to resume explorations. Santa Maria Novella is very close tho Florence's luxury shopping district, revolving around via Tornabuoni and Via della Vigna Nuova. But before you dive in a sea of brands, luxury accessories and jewelry, follow us as we guide you to discover a few hidden spots in the surrounding area, for an **unusual shopping experience ⑤**. We highly recommend two stores in particular. The first can be found in Via del Sole, characteristic little street on the south side of Piazza Santa Maria Novella. At number 23r you'll find **Parsifal**, a marvelous **artisanal jewelry** owned by Patrick, Parisian and adoptive Florentine jeweler. His creations are pretty unique and stylish, people from all over the world come here to get a piece of his art. We personally love his interpretations of Florence's monuments ad bracelets, ear rings and necklaces... enter this charming workshop and be amazed!

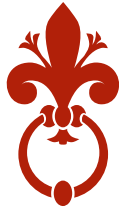
The second place we suggest you check out is **Babele**, in Via delle Belle Donne: **bookstore, art gallery and much more**, this ancient establishment is now managed by the young Enrico, who's special dedication to antique books, sophisticated art pieces and illustration will certainly intrigue you at first sight. Whichever street you'll choose to reach Via Tornabuoni from here will be full of surprises and small **curious**



Here's Patrick at his working station, creating beautiful jewelry!



Babele: bookshop, art gallery and so much more!



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boutique stores worth a visit. If it's **luxury shopping** you're looking for, though, for sure you will find your heaven in **Via Tornabuoni ⑥**. The most famous brands in clothing, accessories and jewelry can be found here, from Tiffany's to Tommy Hilfiger, from Bulgari to Gucci, Prada, Fendi... just check if the price is right first!

A hidden gem among them all is for sure **Loretta Caponi's** store in Piazza Antinori. This very refined and **artisanal sartorial boutique** opened in 1967 and has been thriving since then, marking important moments in the lives of many celebrities such as the **Rockefeller, Jane Fonda, Sting and Madonna**. Here you will find stunning embroidered items for men, women, kids and even decor items for the house. Bring home a very elegant and unique memento of your time in Florence! If you start feeling a little hungry, find a quick and heavenly snack at **Procacci**, in Via Tornabuoni: their **truffle panini** are to die for!

Down the street from Via Tornabuoni you'll notice a massive crenelated building: it's **Palazzo Spini Feroni**, hosting the Ferragamo's boutique and offices but also one of the most peculiar museums in Florence: a museum entirely dedicated to **Salvatore Ferragamo's** history in fashion and a journey through different styles and designs. Fashionistas should give it a chance! To end your afternoon with a poetic view, reach the center of **Ponte Santa Trinita ⑦** from Via Tornabuoni and enjoy the sunset view of Ponte Vecchio: this is one of the best angles to admire the Old Bridge!

Evening and Nightlife

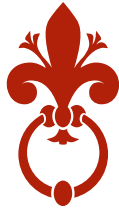
Santa Maria Novella is not the most lively area of the city when it comes to nightlife and venues, but if you follow our indications you'll surely find something that suits you and will provide a nice night out.

Here are our tips for the area!

For a nice rustic **aperitivo** sit down at Uva Nera, in



Ponte Santa Trinita from via Tornabuoni



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Borgo Ognissanti 25, new and young winery, and relax with a glass of Chianti a tasty platters of appetizers! A chic and trendy alternative for aperitivo is **Rivalta caffè ⑧**, in Lungarno Corsini: drinks with a special view on Ponte Vecchio!

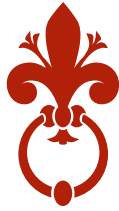
When it comes to dinner, we have a few options for you.

First of all, an unusual experience we highly recommend is to try **Banki Ramen ⑨**, in Via dei Banchi. Regular caffè by day, this unsuspecting bar turns full Japan Ramen place by night, with genuine Japanese chef and shortlist of selected delicious typical dishes! If you wish for a Tuscan typical meal we recommend **Buca Lapi ⑩**, in via del Trebbio: original Florentine institution when it comes to grilled **Bistecca** and other typical dishes.

A rather "extravagant" alternative for dinner can be **BelCore**, in Via dell'Albero. Typical Tuscan dishes combined with seafood alternatives, all presented in a very unique way! Worth a try!

After dinner you can choose to relax and get a drink at the **Fiddler's Elbow ⑪**, right in Piazza Santa Maria Novella, to enjoy the poetic view of the church by night while listening to some good folk music, or maybe you'd like to go see a classical music concert or a night at the Opera...the **New Opera Theater of Florence** is conveniently near: a short taxi ride or a ten minutes walk will get you to the modern Opera House of Florence, always offering a rich program of concerts, recitals and operas.





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Practical Informations

Santa Maria Novella Museum

April-September

Every day : 9 - 19

Friday: 11 - 19

October - March

Every day: 9 - 17.30

Friday: 11 - 17.30

Saturday and other pre-holidays

Year round 9.00 - 17.30

July and August 9-18.30

Sunday and holidays:

Year round 13 - 17.30

July and August 12 - 18.30

Museo Novecento

October - March

Every day: 9.00 - 18.00

Thursday: 9.00 - 14.00

April - September

Every day: 9.00 - 19.00

Thursday: 9.00 - 14.00

Friday: 9.00 - 23.00

Officina Farmaceutica SMN

Every day 9.00 - 20.00

Alinari Museum of Photography

Every day 10.00 - 18.00

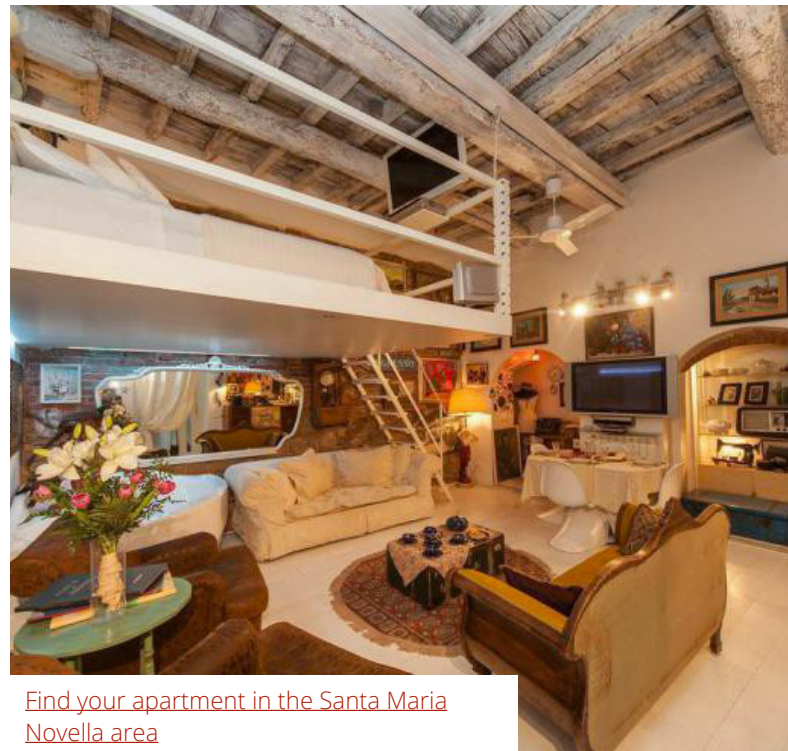
Friday closed

Ferragamo Museum

Every day 10.00 - 19.30

Seasonal Events and Markets

During Christmas time Santa Maria Novella hosts a nice festive market, and sometimes during the year the piazza is home to a variety of festivals, depending on the season: chocolate festival, gelato festival... check online for ongoing events and festivals during your stay in Florence!



[Find your apartment in the Santa Maria Novella 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.

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