

# Romantic Florence

Cath Davies finds Florence rich in culture and hot on passion!

Every girl wants a honeymoon that's filled with romance, so what better destination than Florence? A product of centuries of culture and art, visiting newlyweds will

be captivated by the Italian city's incredible beauty and sense of passion.

Built on the banks of the River Arno, which is bridged by the beautiful Ponto Vecchio, Florence is home to some of the world's most incredible renaissance architecture and artworks. The city was immortalised by the novelist EM Forster in his famous tale of romantic discovery, *A Room with a View*.

## Be inspired

We visited Florence in November, which is an ideal time to escape some of the hoards of tourists that descend on the city every year. Although cold, the weather was dry, sunny and perfect for sightseeing, but it's not uncommon to be met with rain so late in the year. Try to avoid the city in midsummer — the weather hots up and locals head to

outlying areas to avoid the heat — but it's a beautiful honeymoon destination in the spring and autumn.

One of the things we loved about Florence was how easy it is to find your way around the city. The skyline is dominated by the impressive Duomo Cathedral, and it's rare to find yourself in a place where it can't be seen. Florence is a great city to meander around and explore on foot, and, after a few days, we felt confident enough to find our way around with ease (with a little help from the guidebook!). Despite

its compact size, there's no shortage of things to see and do. A must-see is Michelangelo's David, situated in the Accademia Gallery, which is simply awe-inspiring. Another must is the Uffizi Gallery, home to Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* and Renaissance masterpieces by Titian, Giotto and Caravaggio. Widely considered to be the greatest collection of Renaissance art in the world, you won't fail to be moved



The picturesque Ponto Vecchio bridges the two halves of the city

## FAST FACTS

If you're planning a visit to the Uffizi or the Academy, avoid the queues by reserving tickets before you go. Call the Firenze Musei on 055 294 803, where you can reserve tickets for a specific time and date. You don't pay for tickets over the phone, but collect them from the museum 15 minutes before your allocated time (be prepared to pay a €3 booking fee per person).

## USEFUL CONTACTS

Hotels: 055 2480688  
Sasso di Dante: 055 282113  
Hotel Monna Lisa: [www.monnalisa.it](http://www.monnalisa.it)

## GETTING THERE

Meridiana Airlines fly direct to Florence airport from Gatwick, but many tourists choose to fly to Pisa airport because it can be reached from most regional airports in the UK. It takes around an hour to get to Florence from Pisa, and there are frequent bus and train links.

## Be captivated by the city's incredible beauty and sense of passion

Beautiful pieces. Take a walk through the city's streets, too, as you'll find treasure troves of art and architecture. The Basilica di Santa Maria del Fiore is the most famous, but the Basilica di Santa Croce, Santo Spirito and Santa Maria Novella are also filled with beautiful artworks.

### Islands of romance

Get yourself on the islands of culture overdose, escape to one of the most romantic spots in the world: the Boboli Gardens. The gardens lie high above the city and offer panoramic views of Florence. They are large enough to spend the whole day wandering around, and are a perfect destination for a romantic stroll and a picnic.

During our visit we stayed at the Villa Lisa hotel, an ancient Florentine palace converted into a hotel in the 1950s. The original 15th-century floors are still intact and the rooms are elegantly decorated with antiques and furnishings.

There are plenty of places to drink in Florence, but the locals if you ask for the best — no one will give you good pizza and pasta better than the Italians! One of the restaurants we visited was La Trattoria di Dante. As well as serving fabulous food, we had an amazing view of the Duomo from the terrace. Another

of our favourite finds was Ruth's, a Jewish restaurant opposite Florence's synagogue. We loved the warm welcome we received, and it offered a great alternative to the traditional Tuscan eateries in the city.

### See Tuscany

We spent five days in Florence, which was perfect for seeing all the main sites without having to race around the city. If you're planning a longer break, make sure you take time to visit the surrounding Tuscan countryside outside the city walls. It's easy to forget that you're in the centre of some of Italy's most stunning natural surroundings when confronted with all the man-made beauty of Florence, but a trip to the outlying towns will make you feel a million miles away.

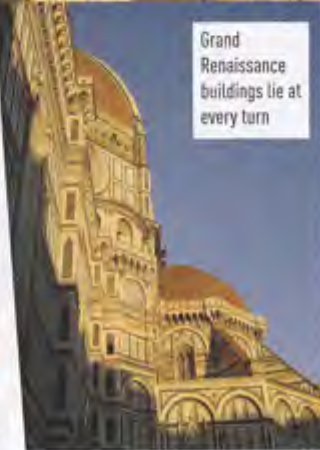
Fiesole is just a short bus journey north of Florence, situated on one of the hills overlooking the city. It has a stunning cathedral, and is perfect for stepping away from the city and enjoying a relaxing day out. Further afield, the preserved medieval city of Siena, around 90 minutes from Florence by train, is also filled with beautiful gothic architecture and certainly worth a visit if you're spending a week or longer in this stunning region. ♥

You and your hubby will love the beauty of Florence



Feel in awe of the impressive interior of the Duomo Cathedral

Grand Renaissance buildings lie at every turn



## WHY STOP AT THE HONEYMOON?

If you want to give your wedding a touch of Florentine magic, why not get married in the city? There are plenty of wedding planners offering wedding packages either in the heart of Florence or in surrounding Tuscany, enabling you to have your ceremony in Italy before enjoying your honeymoon there. Two of the best companies we've come across are My Exclusive Italian Wedding ([www.myexclusiveitalianwedding.com](http://www.myexclusiveitalianwedding.com)) and Weddings in Tuscany ([www.weddingsintuscany.info](http://www.weddingsintuscany.info)).

Lush Tuscan countryside just outside the city walls



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