

Trip to Florence (Firenze), Italy - July 2007



A short summary

This trip report will focus on the trip that my wife, Nikki, and I took to Florence and Tuscany in the period from July 17th - 27th 2007. In Florence we visited many attractions like like Galleria dell'Accademia to see David, Uffizi Gallery, the Duomo (Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore), Ponte Vecchio, Pitti Palace (Palazzo Pitti) etc. The trip report is split into sections: 1) our four day stay in Florence; 2) [eating and drinking in Florence](#) and 3) [our six day stay in Tuscany](#) (near Castellina in Chianti). Please get in touch if you have any questions or comments. All pictures are taken by Nikki and Gard with our Canon Powershot S1 IS camera. Click [here to check out the Florence Google map](#) which will indicate where attractions are located etc.



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Prelude



In 2003 we went to [Milan](#) and [Venice](#) and we had a great time there. After that we decided that it would be nice to visit Italy again and in 2005 we went to [Rome](#) and that was also great. So when we planned a vacation this year we decided to check out Florence and Tuscany as it's short travel time from Norway and we had a limited number of days for vacation. In order to appreciate this trip report to the maximum it might also be useful to check out the other trip reports that we have made from Italy for some other useful tips.

Planning the trip

Once we had decided on a destination we tried to find plane tickets. We decided that we wanted to fly right to Florence, not to e.g. Venice/Bologna as we had limited vacation time and we didn't want to spend extra time getting to Florence by bus/train. We ended up buying the tickets through the Norwegian online travel agent [Reisefeber.no](#). The plane tickets with Lufthansa cost about 3000 Norwegian kroner (about 375€) per person. We also booked the hotel via Reisefeber.no. They have a similar concept to hotwire/priceline so we ended up with **Hotel Anglo American** (coming soon) which cost about 3500 kroner for 4 nights (approx 110€ per night). To get a better understanding of the city we bought the Eyewitness travel guide for Florence and Tuscany.



The second part of our trip would take us into Tuscany. We booked a car through Avis (class B for 275€ for 6 days) and we also booked a room at an Agriturismo place called [Villa di Capovento](#) near Castellina in Chianti but I will get back to the details about this.

The trip begins

Our Lufthansa flight to Frankfurt was bright and early in the morning of July 17th. So already at 05.30 AM we were at the airport in Stavanger. It was quite crowded already as there was a charter flight leaving for Magaluf. It is said that Norwegians have a strange relationship to alcohol - I guess we saw evidence of that when we were trying to get some breakfast at the airport at 5.30 AM and a group of guys in front of us were already trying to buy beer! There was a marked air of disappointment when they were informed that they only started selling alcohol at 6 AM. We got another example on our flight when some young Norwegian guys found out that the alcohol on the plane was free. So one of them went for beer, Bailey's and rum and Coke just to top it of. But hey, I'm not judging - I have 'been there, done that' on similar trips :-)

The flight from Stavanger to Frankfurt was only about 1 1/2 hours and after a short stop in Frankfurt where we had time to get a shot of coffee to wake us up at Starbucks, we were on our way to Florence :-)



Map provided by: www.worldatlas.com

Arriving in Florence



We landed at [Aeroporto di Firenze](#) (also known as Peretola) just after noon. When we got out of the tiny airport we were met by 36 degrees (about 97 Fahrenheit) so it was pretty hot compared to what we had left behind in Norway. We decided to take the bus into town but it was not really clearly marked where the bus stop was located. But we found it by turning right when we got out of the terminal



building and we had to cross the road, past the taxi queue. The bus tickets were 4.5€ per person and the trip into town took only about 15 minutes. The bus stopped at a bus station right next to the train station Santa Maria Novella and from there we just walked to our hotel Anglo American. Read more about the hotel here (XXX).

How to get around Florence?



Florence is not really that big so you can cover a lot of ground by walking. But a Scottish lad I met in KL last year said that you can't trust Norwegians when it comes to advice concerning walking distances :-). But use tools as [MAPfrappe](#) and [Gmaps Pedometer](#) to get a feeling about how big it is. It is only about 600 meters (about 0.4 miles) from the train station to the duomo, about

500 meters from the duomo to Uffizi etc. We also got around town by taking the bus. The bus company ATAF has [lots of routes as you can see on this map](#). I would especially recommend that you figure out the bus service known as **bussini ecologici**. These are 4 routes (marked from A to D) run by small electrical buses and they drive right through the centre of Florence.

Tips: You can buy the bus ticket on the bus itself but that will cost you 2€. If you buy it in advance in a tabacchi (tobacco kiosks) it costs 1.20€. Remember to stamp the ticket when you get onboard the bus. The ticket is valid for 70 minutes.

Most of the buses seem to go through the main bus station located right next to the train station **Santa Maria Novella** and this is also where you find the main stop for the [Florence sightseeing bus](#). For 20€ you can get a 24 hours pass and you can get on and off as many times as you want to. We took this one day and they provided us with pretty good earphones and we could choose which language we wanted to have the commentaries in. If you're on a budget then maybe use the bussini ecologici to get your bearings in the city and have a good map to refer to for identifying the major tourist sites en route.



Note: The address system in Florence is a bit weird. They have red numbers and blue numbers where the red numbers indicates businesses and blue numbers domestic addresses. In writing this is e.g. Via del moro 48r for a restaurant. But via del moro 48 could actually be a good 500m, in the other direction, down the same road!



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Sightseeing in Florence



After checking in and unpacking we headed out to get a feel for the city. It didn't take long before we found a bus stop sign and bus number B came along and that took us straight to **Ponte Vecchio**. The name means old bridge and that is exactly what it is...the oldest bridge in Florence crossing the river Arno. It was built in 1345 and I guess it gives an idea of the history of this city. This bridge once housed butchers, blacksmiths etc but these days the bridge is filled with goldsmiths. It is a beautiful bridge and you get a great view of the river. But it is extremely crowded in the middle of the day and everybody is taking pictures of each other with the beautiful river view as a background :-)

Uffizi gallery – a walk through the renaissance

Our main goal for this Tuesday afternoon was to visit the Uffizi gallery. The general recommendation is to book in advance as this gallery is really crowded but we had read that it would be open late on Tuesday evening. But when we came there about 6-7 PM the line was still way too long so we decided to skip this and go for plan B: a guided tour :-). We stopped by the tourist information centre near **Santa Croce**, got some information and called up Walking Tours of Florence and Tuscany (see italy.artviva.com) and got that organized for 39€ per person.



Tips: Most of the museums that we went to did not accept credit cards. So remember to bring some cash along.



Our tour of the Uffizi took place on a Thursday and we had to meet up at the walking tour office on Via Sassetti no. 1 near Piazza della Repubblica at 1.30 PM. We got some entertainment as we were waiting outside the office as a guy managed to park in another couple's Smart car - or so we thought. The couple returned to their Smart car a few minutes after the guy left. They seemed unfazed and after some remarkable and deft manoeuvring they managed to squeeze out and drive away!

Our guide Sylvia led us from the office to the Uffizi gallery and handed out audio equipment, gave us instructions about the tour and other practical info. Before I say something about the tour a few words about the **Pallazo degli Uffizi**: the building was built by the Medici family in 1560 as offices (Uffizi means office) to start with but parts of it was turned into a gallery so the Medici could show off some of their vast art collection. Trust me, if you go to Florence you will hear and read a lot about the Medici family as they had the power and control over Florence in the golden age and you can see their coat of arms more or less everywhere.



Back to our tour: after going through metal detectors and walking up all the stairs to the gallery we were ready to start our tour with Sylvia. It was a bit annoying to find out that you can't take any pictures inside the gallery and our guide also made some sarcastic comments about this and implied that it

was only done to make more money as there would be lots of gift shops to go through towards the end of our tour. The guards at the Uffizi reminded me of the guards at the Sistine Chapel; from time to time they would run over to tourists that were trying to take a pictures and from time to time they would "shhhhhh" to get the noise level down. It must be a sad job walking around looking constantly peeved.

The guided tour took us to several of the main works of the gallery and we started with examples from before the renaissance and from there we were shown works of Lippi, Leonardo da Vinci, Botticelli, Rafael and Michelangelo.



One of the most famous pictures of the gallery "The Duke and Duchess of Urbino" was unfortunately not present as it was loaned to a museum in Arezzo. I think the one painting that impressed me the most was "Ritratto del papa Leone X con i cardinali Giulio de' Medici e Luigi de' Rossi" by Rafael. The details were just amazing. By 4 PM the tour was over and we had a chance to walk around a bit on our own. We also went to the coffee shop which has an outdoor terrace over the Piazza della Signoria. Unfortunately we didn't get a view of the piazza as we were barred from going all the way to the edge.



All in all it was steep to pay 39€ per person for the tour but it was nice to not have to wait for hours in line. I suppose we could've used an audio guide but Sylvia's guiding us to the most important works seemed very knowledgeable and she told stories around the various paintings that we would not have read about in the general guidebooks.

Tips: Remember to book tickets in advance to avoid standing in line for hours. Basic tickets are 6.5€ but you might have to pay extra to book in advance via Uffizi or another tour guide agency.

On our way out of Uffizi we realised that Sylvia was not joking when she mentioned the gift shops. We did have to go through quite a few gift shops selling books, postcards, food, umbrellas....you name it :-)

If you want to read more about the museum check out these web sites:

www.polomuseale.firenze.it

www.firenzemusei.it

Pallazo Pitti – a mini Versaille palace



We also tried out the city sightseeing bus tour and I guess the bus drivers must be experienced. Some of the streets are really narrow and in some places we were beyond impressed that the bus driver was able to navigate past obstacles. Our first stop was at **Piazzale Michelangelo** across the river. This place gives a great view of the city as it is located on a hill overlooking the city center and there are copies of some of Michelangelo's works (like the David). Unfortunately there was an arena built up for some sort of concert or performance so we didn't get to walk around the entire place. But the view of the city was great :-)

After a bit of a wait we got on to the sightseeing bus again and took the short drive to **Palazzo Pitti**. On the bus I got a bit of a laugh as we got an example of the modern tourist challenge. In front of us were two Asian ladies and they were both falling asleep as we were driving through the part of the tour that probably gave the best view of Florence. I guess that is the kinda stuff that can happen if you are jet-lagged but still determined to try to cover as much as possible in one day.



Back to the Pitti Palace: this palace was originally built for a banker by the name of Luca Pitti in 1457 but when he went bankrupt the Medici family took over the palace and made it into their official residence. The palace is divided into various museums and we bought tickets to cover most of it. I think we had to pay 11.5€ per person for the Palatine and modern art gallery and 9€ for the Boboli gardens, Museo degli Argenti, costume gallery etc. It was the museo degli

Argenti that impressed me the most. The rooms were beautifully decorated and many were painted with a 3D effect that made it hard to see where the wall/ceiling ended and where the painting started. It was also nice to see the



royal apartments and we had a bit of deja-vu as it reminded us of the [Versailles palace outside Paris](#) but the Pitti Palace is less crowded. The Boboli gardens is not as huge as the Versailles gardens either but it offers great views of the city as it stretches up a hillside behind the palace. Try to walk to the Kaffeehaus and take a look at the view from there - it is almost as good as Piazzale Michelangelo. We also stopped by La Grotta Grande where the castes of Michelangelo's 4 prisoners are shown. We would later check them out at the Galleria dell' Accademia but I will get back to that later on.



It seems like Italians can do everything on a bike or scooter. While we were there we saw people talking on their cell phones, drinking from a cup, smoking, eating some gelato etc. I guess it takes years of experience as the traffic can be a bit crazy at times :-)

Tips: You can drink the tap water in Florence. There are also some drinking fountains around town where you can fill up your water bottle. The pressure on some of these fountains were not amazing so in many cases people would be lined up to fill up the bottles. But the water is pretty good and at least you save a couple of \$ on buying bottled water.



The Duomo – amazing engineering and stunning views



The cathedral of Florence is known as **Santa Maria del Fiore** (or just the Duomo) and it stands out in Florence. As the tallest building in the city you will more or less always have a view to the amazing dome. We went there early one morning and we arrived just after 8.30 AM and our goal was to get to the top of the dome. The line was not that long and we got in right after 9 am. After paying the 6€ ticket per person we were ready

to start climbing the 460 or so steps to the top. On the way up it was sad to see that people have used the opportunity to tag the walls - don't people have anything better to do? About half way up we got to the first terrace on the inside of Brunelleschi's dome.



From here we got a great view down to the church but also a great view to the **Last Judgement frescos** above us. After a few more steps we came to a second terrace and now we were at the frescos and once again it is amazing to see that people have actually tagged on top of the frescos on the walls! It was great to get this close to the frescos as you can see all the details up close. It is amazing to think about all

the work that went into decorating this dome.



The last stretch towards the top gets pretty narrow and we got into a bit of a "traffic jam" when an American couple came down the way you were supposed to go up. As an engineer I'm in awe of the achievement of building such a large structure without having the modern aids we have on our hands today. I guess the architect need to have quite a vision and the ability to also see this structure in 3D in order to decide where to place the staircases etc.



Once we got up to the top we were about 90 meters above the ground and got a stunning view of Florence and the surrounding hills. Quite close to the dome you will find the campanile which is just a few meters shorter than the dome, but when walking around you get a full 360 degree view to the city and it was easy to make out Palazzo Pitti, Santa Croce, Uffizi, Palazzo Vecchio etc. I think

we must have spent an hour up there just gazing out at the view, taking pictures, helping others taking pictures etc. I think they must only let in a limited number of people as it wasn't too crowded at the top. On the top there were all sorts of people: Japanese girls posing with their typical V/peace finger sign, kids that were warm, thirsty and bored, couples on honeymoon etc. Going down again was much easier of course but going to the top was absolutely worth the effort and money.



The place in front of the duomo (**Piazza del Duomo**) was always filled with crowds when we were in Florence. The line to get into the Duomo is long so get here early (or late) and remember to dress decent (no shorts or sleeveless tops). I didn't think the interior of the cathedral was that amazing compared to e.g. St. Peter's in Rome. I guess I would have gotten a better idea of the building if I had come on time to take the free guided tour of the church. But I came there right before closing one day and the last tour was just about to

finish off.

The campanile next to the Duomo is 6 meters shorter than the dome but is still offers great views and seems less crowded than the dome. So if you are up to it you can walk the about 414 steps to the top and this also offers great views of the city, the surrounding hills and the dome of the Duomo. The entry ticket costs 6€ per person.

We also went over to the baptistery (Il battistero) to check out the doors "**Gate of Paradise**". The doors are beautiful but be warned - the place is crowded and tour groups (from cruise ships too) gather around here and we were more or less pushed out of the way and not all of them have modern audio equipment. One tour guide had a big loud speaker hanging around his neck so it was not only his tour group that could hear his commentary :-). There is some renovation taking place in the dome of the Duomo. They were removing some scaffolding on the outside when we were there but I assume they will continue with the next section of the dome.



Note: remember to dress decent if you want to get into the Duomo. But it did seem like the women that had bare shoulders could get a thin shawl at the entrance to cover up with. Quite clever in my opinion.

Galleria dell'Accademia – The David



[The academy for Fine Arts](#) was setup already in 1563 and it later became a place for the art collection for students to study. But this gallery is first of all

known for one famous piece of art: Michelangelo's David made in 1504. We went to this gallery one morning at about 9.30 am and there was a line already when we came there. This is another gallery where it is recommended to buy tickets in advance as it is only the Uffizi that draws larger crowds in Florence. To start with the line didn't move at all and I thought "Oh no, we'll be stuck here for hours". But then they started letting in people in groups and after 40 minutes we came into the reception area. We paid 10€ each for the ticket, went through a metal detector and we were then ready to check out the gallery.

To get more out of it we decided to go for an audio guide and I got in line. A Spanish tourist was in front of me and he pointed at the poster and indicated that he wanted two audio guides. The lady behind the counter found two and said 11€ (5.5€ each). But then the guy pointed at the poster and indicated that there was a small sign with a man and a woman and that was only 8€. It turned out that this was for 1 audio guide and one headset which meant that one person has control but both can listen in. But this Spanish guy did not get the concept at all so there was a big discussion between him and the women behind the counter. In the end he said "Fine, I will take two for 11€". Then he paid with a 10€ note and a coin. When he didn't get any change he was like "Where is my change?" and the woman behind the counter was like "You gave me a 10€ and a 1€ coin" but the Spanish guy was convinced that he had given her a 2€ coin and he turned to me to get support. At this point I was getting a Soup Nazi flashback from Seinfeld, he was seconds away from her yelling "No audio guide for you" :-). But he backed off eventually. I went for the husband/wife edition which was one audio guide and one headset for 8€. Btw, I gave her a 10€ note as payment and when I got the change I gave her a quizzical look and asked "Didn't I give you a 20€ note?" *gheghe* I had her for a second before she broke into a smile and understood that I was just pulling her leg.



Tips: If you want to save a couple of euros bring your own little headset with a standard small plug. This can be plugged into the audio guide and save 2.5€

Back to the gallery: the first room contained paintings and also the cast of "The rape of the Sabine women" but the original on Piazza della Signoria is better. Again it was not possible to take pictures in the gallery and again there were some peeved guards walking around making sure that no one would snap some photos. I controlled myself but there were lots of people that found a way to take pictures. One teenager, with her family, was caught red handed and got a lecture from one of the guards but seconds after the guard was gone she was snapping pictures again! But hey, what can they do? I guess the worst thing that can happen is that you get thrown out of the museum.



Galleria dell'Accademia is quite small and it is room 2 that contains what "everybody" is there to see: **Michelangelo's David** (also referred to as 'The David' on the audio guide). The 5.2 meter (17 feet) statue is beautiful and this is the original that used to stand on **Piazza della Signoria**. It was moved to the gallery in 1873 for its own protection. The statue is on display under a glass dome (what better spotlight can one get?) and you can walk all around it to view all the details from all the angles. There are also some

chairs where you can sit down and just admire him.

The gallery also contains The Four Prisoners (Quattro prigionieri) also by Michelangelo, works by Filippino Lippi, Botticelli etc but everything fades a bit in comparison to The David, of course.

Piazza della Signoria – the outdoor gallery

If you go to Florence I guarantee that you will eventually end up on this square. Here you will find the Uffizi on one side, Palazzo Vecchio on another but also outdoor cafes and of course various sculptures and statues. We walked over the square many times as it is close to Ponte Vecchio, Uffizi, Duomo etc. Some of the



statues are a copy of Michelangelo's David, and on the terrace Loggia dei Lanzi you will find the original of "The rape of the Sabine Women" by Giambologna, Perseus by Cellini etc. It is a beautiful square and it is amazing to see some of these art works stand around in the open. We never did get a chance to visit Palazzo Vecchio but I guess we have to save something for a second visit. There is actually a passage from Palazzo Vecchio to Palazzo Pitti. It is known as Vasari's corridor and it was built so that the Medici family could move from their residence to Uffizi and the Palazzo Vecchio without having to mix with the 'common



masses' :-). According to the guidebook there are guided walks from time to time.

Mercato Centrale – all the stomach desires

This market place in the middle of Florence is worth a visit. I'm not sure if the prices are good or not but it was great to just walk around to look at the selection of food. Here you can find regular stuff like cheese (lots of pecorino, parmesan etc), roosters, t-bone steaks, various Italian hams (prosciutto) etc. But the strangest food on display must be cow stomachs! This is used to e.g. make lampredotto sandwich which is a local delicacy. I never did get a chance to taste it. But I will get more back to food in the [eating and drinking section in the next chapter](#) of the trip report. But the market is worth a visit.



Science museum – amazing collection but no air-con



The Museo di Storia della Scienza is located right behind the Uffizi and we paid 7.5€ per person for the entrance. We went there one day after lunch - the middle of and warmest part of the day. When we got to the start of the exhibition the windows in the room were open but the thermometer showed 35 degrees Celsius (95 degrees Fahrenheit) anyway. The collection of instruments in the museum is impressive but I'm afraid that the layout and information was a bit...well, boring. There were information pamphlets in English but they did not really give any fun and interesting information. But here you can find telescopes used by Galileo Galilee, huge globes to show motion of planets and stars etc. But I have to admit that it was hard to focus when it was that hot. But there was a tour in progress that we listened in on from time to time (I know....very bad). Some of the instruments were demonstrated by the museum employees but they were too few and far apart. There should have been more interesting information and more hands on exhibits.

Santa Croce – gothic church and famous tombs

The white façade of this church always seemed to be reflected by the sun's bright rays every time we stopped by Piazza di Santa Croce. But strangely enough there were not that many people in this area. We paid 5€ per person



to get into the church and inside you can find the tombs of famous Florentines such as Michelangelo, Galileo etc. The church was apparently flooded in the great flood of 1966 and there are a series of photos showing how bad the flood was. The church is rather simple and I guess we were not that impressed in comparison to e.g. duomo but I guess it has something to do with the fact that parts of the church was covered up internally by lots of



scaffolding.

Tips: There is a tourist information place near Santa Croce and there is also a toilet that can be used there (for a small fee of course :-)

A road trip to Pisa

On Saturday July 21st we had booked a rental car with Avis and the original plan was to pick it up at the airport. But having noticed that there was an Avis office nearby our hotel, we changed the pick up order.

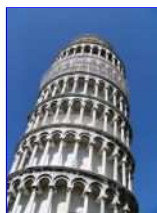
The car from Avis (class B) cost us 275€ for the 6 days we had it and we were assigned a small Opel Corsa 1.2. Getting out of Florence was a bit tricky but in the end we found out that we had to trust our GPS (we nicknamed her



Consuela) and she pointed the way to the local Harley-Davidson store and from there towards Pisa. We rented the car to be able to get to our next stop in Tuscany (and to get around there) but we found out that the distance to Pisa is only about 80 km (about 50 miles) on the Strada Grande aka FI-PI-LI (after Firenze-Pisa-Livorno) so we decided to stop by on our way. Our trip took a bit longer time than expected as there was a car accident that



blocked both lanes going towards Pisa.



We came to Pisa about 3 PM and to my surprise it was not a big problem finding parking as there were well marked parking lots in the area. The side trip had one target of course: the famous **leaning tower of Pisa** or [Torre Pendente](#). The construction of the tower started already in the year 1173 and was a bell tower for the Duomo right next to it. But what has made it famous is that it is...well, leaning.



According to the guidebook the tower started leaning over soon after construction begun as the foundation is not the best. In the end it was leaning over so much that they had to close it for several years to take measure to make sure that it wouldn't tip over.

When we walked into the area known as **Campo dei Miracoli** I was surprised to see that the tower was only a small part of the complex. In the area you will find a huge Duomo, a baptistery, a cemetery etc. Today there are also hundreds of small



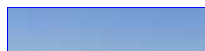
souvenir shops selling t-shirts, small models of the leaning towers etc. We just walked around for a while, took some pictures of the tower and the other buildings and OK, I admit it, we also took some goofy pictures of each other where we pose as we are holding up the tower (that's the beauty of being a tourist right?). You can get into and to the top of the tower but it will cost you 15€ and there are a limited number of tickets. In the reception they have a very good overview when there is an available space next. I guess the recommendation is as usual. Come early or late to avoid the lines.



Tips: Bring a GPS! I borrowed one from a colleague (thank you Nina) and it was of great help to us navigating out of Florence, back to the Florence airport at the end of our trip etc.

Our itinerary

One of the most common questions I get when people send me e-mails is:



"what kind of itinerary do you have when visiting....?"

The description above is not in chronological sequence. But here is a short summary of what we did on the various days. My recommendation is: don't over-plan your trip but buy a good guidebook and make a list of the things you want to see and do and take it from there. Having a schedule where you have to run from one place to another will not make your trip fun.

Tuesday: Arriving, getting settled at the hotel, figuring out the bus schedule, walk to get to know the city center (Uffizi, Santa Croce, Ponte Vecchio, Piazza della Signoria, tourist information)

Wednesday: City sightseeing bus, Piazzale Michelangelo, Palazzo Pitti and Boboli gardens

Thursday: The Duomo, inside of Santa Croce, guided tour of Uffizi

Friday: Galleria dell'Accademia, Museo di Storia della Scienza, top of Campanile, inside of the Duomo

Saturday: Picking up car at Avis, drive to Pisa, drive to Chianti area.



Conclusion

It was great to visit Florence as I have heard a lot about the city through travel forums, colleagues, shows on the travel channel etc. There is a lot to see and do in Florence but in my opinion it can't match [Rome](#) when it comes to "attractions". But once again it was amazing to experience pieces of art with our own eyes.



Florence was just elected to be the best destination in Europe by [Condé Nast](#) but I'm not sure it can beat places like [Rome](#) and [Paris](#). The downside of being elected "best destination" is of course that the city is extremely popular and there are hordes of tourists around the main attractions especially during the summer months. If you are short on time you should remember to book tickets in advance to places like the Uffizi and Galleria dell'Accademia. But also remember

that you don't have to stroll that far from the main attractions before you find small, narrow streets where you are more or less alone. With or without the

crowds, Florence is a great place to visit and I wouldn't mind going again. We had some wonderful days there: there is lots to see and do, they have some of the most amazing art works in this world, the scenery is beautiful, great gelato (ice cream) and last but not least: you can easily find mouth watering food and wine. I have to admit that part of the reason that I love Italy is the food. But you can read more about where we went to eat in the [Eating/drinking section](#).



I hope that you found this trip report useful please give me feedback if you have comments or questions or I have made factual mistakes or if. I can be reached on gardkarlsen@hotmail.com. Please move to the next page and read about [eating and drinking in Florence](#). Below are some more tips that you might find useful.

Some "useful" tips

So what do you need to bring to Florence? And how do you plan a trip to Florence? Here are some useful tips:

- A pair of good walking shoes: I guess this goes without saying but there is a lot to see in Florence and even if the city is not that big you will do a lot of walking - there is no underground rail system but the buses are pretty reliable.
- Wondering about the weather in Florence? Check out [weatherbase.com](#) to get some weather stats so you know what to expect. And check the weather forecast right before you go so that you know how cold/warm it could be.
- A good guidebook: yes, you can find a lot of useful info on the internet. But get a good guidebook with a comprehensive street map. Which one to buy is up to you :-). We borrowed 2 others and basically each one was useful in its own way - I think we ended up regularly using 2 of the 3
- Which forums to ask questions: Try [TripAdvisor](#), [Fodor's](#), [SlowTalk](#), [Frommer's](#) and [Travelers to Go!](#)
- Are you bringing a laptop? We did and it was great to use this to check out attractions and opening times, maps etc. There are wireless connections where you can buy surf time.
- Do you wonder how far it is from one place to another in Florence? Why not use [Google Earth/Google Maps](#) to measure? I find this to be a great tool.
- Use [Microsoft maps](#) for a bird's eye view. The details of Florence are stunning! [Take a look at e.g. the duomo](#).
- Here is a [interactive Google map](#) where I have highlighted some of the places that we went to
- In Italy different from the rest of Europe? [Check out this short movie](#) to find out.
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Feel free to check out the next section: [Eating and drinking in Florence](#) :-)

