

I – Piazza Duomo

The Gothic Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore

A typical example of Florentine Gothic architecture, the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore took six centuries to complete. Its name, Holy Mary of the Flower, is a clear allusion to the lily, the symbol of the city. Designed by Arnolfo di Cambio (1245-1302), one of the greatest architect-sculptors of his age, it was erected around the ancient Cathedral of Santa Reparata, torn down as soon as the building was roofed over, though its remains, as well as the tombs of Giotto and Brunelleschi, can still be visited from the interior.

Filippo Brunelleschi completed the Cathedral in 1436 with the elegant Cupola, still considered a marvel of engineering. In 1572 Giorgio Vasari started to fresco the cupola of the Cathedral, drawing inspiration from the Last Judgement in the Sistine Chapel. When he died, in 1574 after having carried out only a third of the work, Federico Zuccari, to complete the work.

The frescoes have been scrupulously restored, and it is now possible to appreciate the power of the cycle. Note the frescoed equestrian monuments by Paolo Uccello and Andrea del Castagno, the Della Robbia lunettes, the clock by Paolo Uccello, the stained glass windows in the interior and the bronze doors and inlaid wooden cup-boards in the Sacristy. The façade, the last work on the Cathedral, dates from the late 19th century.

Giotto Bell Tower

Built on a square plan, the Giotto Bell Tower rises on the right of the Cathedral. It was designed and built by the great artist in the last years of his life (1334-1337) and completed by Francesco Talenti in 1359. Faced in priceless green, red and white marbles, it is decorated with 56 bas-relief tiles by Andrea Pisano and Luca Della Robbia and 16 statues of Prophets and Sibyls (now in the Opera Museum). 413 steps lead up to the panoramic terrace.

Baptistry

Faced in green and white marble and a masterpiece of Florentine Romanesque art, the octagonal-shaped Baptistry (1128) beside the Cathedral is dedicated to St. John the Baptist, Patron Saint of the city. The origins of Dante's "beautiful San Giovanni" are uncertain though, according to tradition, it was founded in Roman times and dedicated to the god Mars. In 12th century the original sandstone of the external revestment was covered with green Prato and white Carrara and marble inlay: the final result is a prototype for Romanesque architecture in the city. The external revestment was completed in the 13th century and alterations were made to the semicircular apse, making it rectangular; a start was made on the decorations for the interior, the rectangular apse was faced with mosaics together with the cupola. From being a revolutionary building in the history of architecture, the Baptistry evolved to become a workshop for the new Florentine school of painting that originated with Coppo di Marcovaldo, Cimabue and eventually led to Giotto. The splendid bronze doors (including the Door of Paradise) are the work of Andrea Pisano and Lorenzo Ghiberti.

II – Piazza Duomo

Palazzo Medici Riccardi

Palazzo Medici Riccardi, which introduces the Medice family's quarter of the city, stands in the ancient Via Larga, today Via Cavour, near the Cathedral. Cosimo the Elder commissioned Michelozzo to build the palace in 1444, and although this monumental building symbolized the family's importance for centuries, it now also bears the name of the Riccardi family, who purchased it in the 17th century. A tour of the palace, destined to become the Medici Museum, starts on the first floor with the magnificent Gallery, a fine example of late Baroque art. The beautiful internal courtyard contains a display of Roman remains and sculptures. The palace's real treasure is the unique and recently restored Chapel of the Magi with portraits of many members of the Medici family and personalities of the age.

The Chapel of the Magi

The Chapel of the Magi, decorated by Benozzo Gozzoli in 1459-60 as a private place of worship for the Medici family in their newly built palace is definitely one of the sights to see in Florence. A train of followers surrounds the Three Wise Men on their way to Bethlehem, in a landscape painted in incredible detail. The sumptuous and varied costumes, princely finishings and exotic animals make this pictorial cycle one of the most fascinating testimonies of art and costume of all time. The frescoes in fact drew explicit inspiration from the procession of the Ecumenical Council the met in Florence in 1439 and Gozzoli portrayed several protagonist of the time, including himself, two leaders from the East and a few members of the Medici family, although their exact identification is disputed.

San Lorenzo

III – The Church of San Lorenzo

Brunelleschi carried out the Medici Church of San Lorenzo by enlarging a mediaeval church consecrated by St. Ambrose, the Bishop of Milan in 393. The interior exemplifies Renaissance religious architecture and contains many important works of art, among them two pulpits in bronze by Donatello and the Old Sacristy by Brunelleschi. The church became a Medici family sepulcher because all the first Medicis were buried there. Michelangelo instead carried out the elegant Medici Laurentian Library, vestibule and reading room, which can be reached from the Cloisters. Founded by Cosimo the Elder and enlarged by Lorenzo the Magnificent, the library contains some really rare ancient manuscripts and codexes.

IV – The Medici Chapels

The Medici Chapels form the most famous part of the San Lorenzo complex (go round the outside of the church to reach the entrance). Pope Leo X and his cousin the future Pope Clement VII gave Michelangelo the commission to carry out the New Sacristy, where Lorenzo the Magnificent is buried with his brother Giuliano, murdered in the Pazzi Plot in 1478, and their descendants, Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino, and Giuliano, Duke of Nemours. Michelangelo decorated it with some of his most famous sculptures: portraits of the dead princes and his interpretations of Day, Night, Dawn and Dusk. The huge octagonal Chapel of the Princes, designed by Matteo Nigetti is the official family sacrum and mausoleum. The entire surface of the interior is a dazzling mosaic of dark marble and semiprecious stones.

V – The Market of San Lorenzo

The quarter of San Lorenzo is one of the busiest areas in the old city center and the Church and square are surrounded by a colorful cosmopolitan open-air market – open all day – that sells all kinds of leather goods, hand-made knits, textiles, woolens and a vast assortment of typical Florentine crafts.

However as you pass through the busy market stalls, look out for the Liberty style San Lorenzo Market, a huge construction in cast iron with large glazed windows that was built in the 19th century when Florence was the Capital of Italy. Designed by Milanese architect Giuseppe Mengoni, it is one of the most interesting architectural inventions of the time. The market-like interior is divided up into a series of corridors hosting some fascinating shops, many of which offer free tastings, where you can buy fine wines and really fresh food products, from meat, cheese and fish to dressed meats, oils, wines and gastronomic specialties, most of them from the Tuscan countryside.

Very popular among Florentines and tourists alike, this market is the ideal place for purchasing craft products or tasting the local cuisine while strolling through streets that boast a thousand-year-old history.

San Marco

I – Piazza San Marco

The Museum of San Marco is situated inside the ancient Dominican convent, the spiritual center of 15th century Florence, and contains the splendid frescoes carried out by Fra Angelico to decorate the monks' cells. Note the elegant Library, designed by Michelozzo in 1448, with its rich collection of illuminated manuscripts, the first public library of the Renaissance.

II – The Academy Gallery

The Academy Gallery stands in Via Ricasoli, 60, which can be reached from the opposite side of the square.

It is one of Florence's best known museums because it boasts many sculptures by Michelangelo, including the famous David. It also contains a large number of paintings, brought here by Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo to help the studies of the young artists at the Academy of Art, which still stands next door to the gallery.

III – Piazza Santissima Annunziata

From Piazza San Marco turn right to reach the nearby Basilica of S.S. Annunziata, founded in 1250 and enlarged several times. The interior contains the small Cloisters of Vows and the Cloisters of the Dead, with frescoes by Andrea del Sarto, Rosso Fiorentino and Pontorno. Note the small Temple of the Annunziata designed by Michelozzo inside the church. The rectangular square, defined as "the most harmonious and perfect in the works", was created from 1252 onwards.

The elegant Hospital of the Innocenti, a masterpiece built by Filippo Brunelleschi to shelter abandoned children (even today it organizes activities for children), stands on the left. The interior contains the severely elegant Cloisters and the Hospital Art Gallery, full of fine paintings, including the Adoration of the Magi by Ghirlandaio. The 9-arched loggia, raised up on columns, is decorated with the famous medallions of "cherubs in swaddling clothes" in glazed terracotta on a blue background by Andrea della Robbia.

Piazza Signoria

I – Piazza della Repubblica

Once the old Roman forum, it is today famous for its cafes onto the square.

II – The Church of Orsanmichele

So between Via Calimala and Via dei Calzaiuoli, it was built on an ancient granary, then modified and embellished over the years by the 21 City Guilds of Arts and Crafts. Their Patron Saints can be seen in the frescoes in the interior and in the priceless sculptures carried out by some of the greatest artists of the Renaissance.

III – Piazza della Signoria

Via dei Calzaiuoli leads into Piazza della Signoria. The square was enlarged in 1258 by demolishing the houses and towers of the ancient Ghibelline families, defeated by the Guelphs in the bitter civil wars and forced to leave the city. It became the centre of Florentine civic life. The population met here to approve the decisions of the Signoria (government), when called to arms to defend Republic, for celebrations and even executions (Savonarola was burnt at the stake here in 1452). Dominated by Palazzo Vecchio, the square contains some interesting statuary, like the copies of Michelangelo's David and Donatello's Judith and Holophernes in bronze in front of the palace. The Fountain of Neptune, with the gigantic statue of the sea god by Bartolomeo Ammannati, is on the left, while Giambologna's equestrian monument to Cosimo I de' Medici rises up in the centre of the north wing of the square.

The eye-catching Loggia of Orcagna or dei Lanzi (1376-1382) stands on the corner with the Uffizi square. Under its late Gothic roof and three pointed arches, we can admire 15 statues by the great masters of the Renaissance, among them the Rape of the Sabine, the masterpiece by Giambologna and Benvenuto Cellini's wonderful bronze statue of the Perseus, recently restored, holding up the head of the Medusa.

Palazzo Vecchio

III – Palazzo Vecchio

Topped by a projecting battlemented gallery, this majestic palace, with its rusticated ashlar facing and elegant trefoil windows, dominates the square. The 94 meter tower, the highest in the city, rises off-center to the right. It is the result of several successive building stages between the 13th-16th centuries. The early palace was built by Arnolfo di Cambio in 1298 for the Priors, or representatives of the Guilds, who then governed the Republic. Michelozzo carried out various alterations for Cosimo the Elder and later, when Cosimo I came to power, Vasari transformed it into a residence for the ruler and his family. The Palace lost its exclusive political role after 1565, when this was transferred to the Uffizi (Offices) and

the royal Pitti Palace. It reclaimed its former glory in the late 19th century when it became the temporary seat of the Italian government and parliament and has housed the City Council since 1872.

A tour of the fascinating interior includes Michelozzo's charming courtyard, later embellished with frescoes and the Putto fountain by Verrocchio; the "Dogana" courtyard by Cronaca, who, with Antonio da Sangallo, also created the splendid Hall of the Five Hundred.

Of note, the Hall of the Two Hundred, the Quarters of the Elements, the Quarters of Eleanor of Toledo, the Residence of the Priors and the Quarters of Leo X. Most rooms are frescoed throughout, often by Vasari, though many artists worked here, including Leonardo and Michelangelo, leaving statues, paintings, ornaments and splendid furnishings in their wake.

Uffizi Gallery

IV – The Uffizi Gallery

Situated in the harmonious colonnaded square designed by Vasari, a symbol of 16th century Florentine architecture, the Uffizi Gallery was also the first museum to be opened to the public: the Grand Duke in fact gave permission for visitors to tour it from the year 1591. Its four centuries of history make the Uffizi Gallery the oldest museum in the world.

Cosimo I de' Medici commissioned Giorgio Vasari to build the Palace, whose construction was started in 1560. It was later completed by Buontalenti, who also designed the famous Tribune, to house the administrative offices (or "uffizi") of the Government, because Palazzo Vecchio, which also overlooks Piazza della Signoria, had become too small to hold them all. However it was Cosimo's son Francesco I who was responsible for the palace's gradual transformation into a museum from 1581, when he closed the Gallery on the second floor with huge windows and arranged part of the Grand Ducal collection of classical statues, medals, jewelry, weapons, paintings and scientific instruments here. Untiring collectors, the Medici were forever adding to the Gallery: some of the most important elements in the collection come from the legacy left by Vittoria della Rovere, Ferdinando II's mother, in 1631, together with the many acquisitions made by Cardinal Leopoldo de' Medici (1617-1675), which were to create the basis of the Gallery of Prints and Drawings and the collection of Self-portraits, today displayed in the Vasari Corridor that links the Uffizi to the royal Pitti Palace.

When Gian Gastone, the last Medici Grand Duke, died, his sister Anna Maria Ludovica managed to prevent the artistic patrimony from being scattered with the famous "Family Pact" (1737, and reconfirmed in her will of 1743), which, instead of bequeathing everything to the successor of the House of Hapsburg-Lorraines, left the collection to the city of Florence itself "to be an ornament to the Government, useful to the public and to attract the curiosity of foreigners". Altered and rearranged several times over the centuries, the exhibition rooms are now composed of over 45 rooms containing about 1.700 paintings, 300 sculptures, 46 tapestries and 14 pieces of furniture and/or ceramics. In actual fact the Uffizi owns about 4.800 works, the remainder of which are either in storage or on loan to other museums.

Ponte Vecchio

V – Ponte Vecchio

Via Por Santa Maria, once the main route into the city center, heads straight down to the Ponte Vecchio, the first and therefore oldest bridge in the city. Built in wood before the year 1000, then constructed in masonry and destroyed several times by the Arno in flood, it was reconstructed as we see it today by Taddeo Gaddi, a student of Giotto, in 1345. The characteristic shops on the bridge at first hosted butchers' shops, as here they could conveniently throw their waste matter directly into the river, and were only later occupied by craftsmen, goldsmiths and jewelers, when the bridge became the main route leading to the Medici palace. Today it is a popular salon for jewelry and precious stones, displayed in the characteristic projecting shop windows.

The Vasari Corridor

The covered gallery, known as the Vasari Corridor, runs above the shops for the entire length of the bridge to connect Palazzo Vecchio and the Uffizi with the Pitti Palace. It was built by Giorgio Vasari in 1564 to link up the Medici residence with the Uffizi where they worked. Vasari thus created a monumental urban "footpath" that took the absolute power of the ruler right into the historic heart of the city. A second

corridor above Via della Ninna in fact links the other side of the Uffizi building with Palazzo Vecchio, the seat of Florentine government since the 13th century.

The Corridor was restored and reopened to the public in 1973, but can only be visited by appointment of by groups. It contains over 700 paintings, all dating from the 17th and 18th centuries, as well as the important collection of self-portraits by some of the most famous masters of painting of the 16th to the 20th century. This collection, unique in the world receives regular additions to this day.

VI – Borgo San Jacopo

Running parallel with the Arno, this extremely characteristic street (turn right after crossing the Ponte Vecchio) leads towards Via Maggio and the colorful Santo Spirito area. Before retreating, the Germans blew up all the bridges (except for the Ponte Vecchio) and any constructions in their vicinity, however few people realize that most of the buildings lining the street, including many fine patrician palaces, were rebuilt immediately after the war, many of them designed and supervised by the famous architect Giovanni Michelucci. Here you can find several picturesque restaurants and a variety of shops.

Oltarno

I – Pitti Palace

The southern side of the Ponte Vecchio leads towards the quarter of Santo Spirito, “on the other side of the Arno”, where popular and artisan traditions are still very much alive. The Pitti Palace, which became the main residence of the Medici family in the late 16th century, is only a short walk away, along Via Guicciardini. It is worth stopping off to visit the pretty Church of Santa Felicita on the left. The beautiful palace courtyard designed by Ammannati hosts the entrance to the Palatine Gallery, which contains the private collections of the Grand Dukes of Tuscany with works by Titian, Giorgione, Raphael and Rubens. The Pitti Palace and the Boboli Gardens also house the Gallery of Modern Art, the Silver Museum, the Costume Gallery, the Coach Museum (at present closed), the Porcelain Museum and the suggestive Royal Apartments, 14 rooms decorated with furniture, furnishings and works of art dating from the 16th to the 19th centuries.

II – Boboli Gardens

The courtyard gives on to the huge and very beautiful Boboli Gardens in Italian style created for the Medici family by architect and sculptor Niccolò Pericoli, known as Il Tribolo, between 1550 and 1558 who transformed the small mediaeval garden into a symbol of princely power. Many of the Court festivities were held here and further inventive touches – statues, grottoes, fountains, the Amphitheatre and various buildings – were added over the years by Buontalenti, Ammannati, Giambologna, Tacca and the Parigi architects.

III – Fort Belvedere & Villa Bardini & Gardens

The gardens stretch up the hill as far as Fort Belvedere, a 16th century fortress, built by Bernardo Buontalenti as a stronghold for the Medici treasury, which offers a really unique view over the city from its grounds. Nearby, in Costa San Giorgio 4, the splendid and recently opened Bardini Gardens are well worth a visit, together with the Villa, which hosts a changing series of exhibitions, the Annigoni Museum and the Capucci Foundation.

IV – The Church of Santo Spirito

A series of narrow streets link Piazza Pitti with via Maggio, which hosts the showrooms of the famous Florentine antiquarians. From here, Via Sant’Agostino leads to the picturesque square dominated by the sober Renaissance façade of the Church of Santo Spirito designed by Filippo Brunelleschi in 1444, two years before his death. One of the greatest masterpieces of Renaissance architecture, it was completed by his students, while the elegant bell tower was designed by Baccio d’Agnolo. The interior is arranged on a Latin cross, divided into three naves by a colonnade, and contains many fine works of art. The octagonal cupola-topped sacristy was carried out on a design by Giuliano da Sangallo and Simone del Pollaiuolo, known as

Cronaca. The refectory of the Convent next door is now a fascinating museum.

V – Piazza del Carmine

The Church of Santa Maria del Carmine in the Oltarno area is situated in characteristic Piazza del Carmine. The church is well worth visiting for the Brancacci Chapel, a recently restored masterpiece of Renaissance painting, which contains frescoes that, thanks to their innovative use of perspective, were an inspiration for the generations that followed. In collaboration with Masolino, Masaccio worked on them from 1427-28 and they were completed after his departure from Florence by Filippino Lippi (after 1480)

Santa Maria Novella

I – Santa Maria Novella

Piazza Santa Maria Novella with its splendid Basilica, started for the Dominican friars in 1246, lies only a short distance from the railway station. The construction of the church was carried out by three architect-monks. The upper part of the green and white marble façade of the church was designed and completed in pure Renaissance style by Leon Battista Alberti on a commission from the rich banker Giovanni di Paolo Rucellai. The interior contains splendid masterpieces, such as the Trinity by Masaccio, frescoes by Filippino Lippi and Ghirlandaio, the Giotto Crucifix and the Crucifix in wood by Brunelleschi.

The Museum of Santa Maria Novella entrance is beside the church. It contains three Monumental Cloisters (including the famous Green Cloisters frescoed by Paolo Uccello), the Refectory and the great Chapter House or Spanish Chapel, used for worship by the Spanish gentlemen in Eleonora of Toledo's suite. The ancient Pharmacy of the convent, which still distills its very popular perfumes, can be found round the corner in Via della Scala.

From Piazza Santa Maria Novella, take ancient Via del Sole to reach the Church of San Pancrazio, today deconsecrated and containing the Marino Marini Museum, dedicated one of the greatest Italian sculptors of the 20th century. The Rucellai Chapel, near the museum, contains the wonderful little Temple of the Holy Sepulchre by L.B. Alberti.

II – Via della Vigna Nuova

One of Florence's main shopping streets, it takes its name from an old vineyard that belonged to the monks of San Pancrazio. The street stood on one of busiest and most direct routes into the city from Rome, Siena and Pisa. It boasts several fascinating and very beautiful monuments, among them the splendid Palazzo Rucellai, composed of a series of small mediaeval houses incorporated behind a single façade. It was carried out for the Rucellai, a rich merchant family, by Bernardo Rossellino between 1446 and 1458 and based on a design by Leon Battista Alberti. Alberti is also attributed the elegant Loggia Rucellai opposite. In 15th century Florence all the great families owned a loggia near their palaces, using them for conducting business, meetings or special family events. Today this street, an off-shoot of Via Tornabuoni, hosts some of Florence's most elegant and exclusive fashion stores. The beautifully arranged windows, displaying some of the best designed haute couture, leather goods, jewelry and knits in the world, often Florentine-made, are a joy for the eyes and not necessarily a pain for the purse. Here you will find it impossible to resist treating yourself to making some purchase, however small, to take home with you as a reminder of your stay in Florence.

III – Piazza Strozzi

This square lies half way between Via Tornabuoni and Piazza della Repubblica and is dominated by Palazzo Strozzi, which Filippo Strozzi commissioned Benedetto da Maiano to build in 1489. The imposing palace is one of the most authentic expressions of the Florentine Renaissance and today hosts many important art exhibitions.

Nearby Via de'Vecchietti leads to Palazzo Davanzati, the Florentine House Museum. The various rooms, many of them frescoed, with ceilings in wood, contain furniture, paintings and objects of everyday domestic and culinary use.

Piazza Santa Trinita

Traffic-free Via Porta Rossa ends up in Piazza Santa Trinita dominated by the Baroque façade of the Church of Santa Trinita, built in the late 11th century, and then enlarged and transformed in Gothic style in the early 14th century. Buontalenti designed the stone façade in the late 16th century. The interior contains the Sassetti Chapel, with frescoes by Ghirlandaio. The church stands opposite Palazzo Spini Feroni. This ancient fortress was one of Arnolfo di Cambio's first works and today the home of the Ferragamo fashion house.

IV – Via Tornabuoni

Lined with elegant houses, this is Florence's most exclusive and fashionable shopping street, whose shop windows flaunt all the most famous names in international haute couture. It is well worth walking along the entire length of the street as far as Piazza Antinori, with its Palace and Baroque church, and Via Rondelli, to be able to fully appreciate all its fashionable stores.

V – Lungarno Acciaiuoli

The Arno end of Via Tornabuoni cuts into Lungarno Acciaiuoli, which follows the river and gives onto a magnificent and perhaps unique view of the Ponte Vecchio. The Arno itself is lined with many imposing palaces, one of the most impressive of which is Palazzo Corsini on Lungarno Corsini in the opposite direction. On clear days, or at dawn or sunset, the contrasting colours and beautiful effect of the bridge and the palaces around it reflected in the water are enough to inspire any artist or photographer. Before reaching the Ponte Vecchio make a detour into ancient Borgo S.S. Apostoli so as to admire the 11th century Romanesque church of the same name in pretty Piazzeta del Limbo.

The river is crossed at the end of Via Tornabuoni by the Ponte Santa Trinita, built in 1557 by Ammannati, destroyed in 1944 and rebuilt in 1958, after dredging as many of the original stones as possible from Arno. The four statues of the seasons, set on the corners of the bridge, are still the originals. Cross over the bridge to reach Piazza Tornabuoni, with Borgo San Jacopo opening off on the left and Via Santo Spirito on the right. These two ancient streets boast many monumental patrician residences, all notable examples of art and architecture.

Santa Croce

I – House of Dante

A short walk along Via del Corso, just off Via Calzaiuoli, takes you past many brightly lit shop windows, to Via de' Cerchi on the right, which leads into Via Dante Alighieri. The Father of the Italian language was born here at n.2 in 1265. The Alighieri Tower rises next to the house and very near the House of Dante Museum (constructed specifically in the early 20th century), which contains a collection of works and documentation on the life of the great poet.

II – The Bargello

The entrance door into the Romanesque Badia Fiorentina with its hexagonal spire, is on the right, at the end of Via del Corso. A little further on, turn right into Via del Proconsolo, which follows the ancient lines of the Roman walls, and leads to the Bargello. This severe medieval palace was the ancient prison and the seat of the Captains of Justice. Today it is a sculpture museum and contains masterpieces by Brunelleschi, Michelangelo, Cellini, Giambologna and Donatello, as well as precious ivories, enamels, jewels, tapestries and weapons.

III – Sant' Ambrogio market

Well worth visiting is the characteristic Sant' Ambrogio market in Piazza Ghiberti in the Santa Croce area, housed in a 19th century building designed in the style of a cast-iron pavilion. Here you can find a wide choice of gastronomic products at popular prices, while the colorful market stalls outside offer everything from fruit and vegetables to flowers and clothes. Open in the mornings from Monday to Saturday.

IV- The Basilica of Santa Croce

The Basilica was originally a small oratory founded, according to tradition, by St. Francis when he passed through Florence between 1217 to 1221.

The Basilica itself was built on a design by the architect Arnolfo di Cambio in 1295. A masterpiece of Gothic art, it is the largest Franciscan church in Italy.

The interior is divided into three naves, a choir and a transept full of chapels patronized by illustrious local families.

The chapels and church walls were covered in frescoes by Giotto and his school. The same artists also designed the beautiful stained glass windows.

The statuary boasts work by Donatello, Benedetto da Maiano, Antonio and Bernardo Rossellino and Desiderio da Settignano.

The city Pantheon, it contains the tombs of many illustrious Italians, among them Michelangelo, Galileo Galilei, Ugo Foscolo and Vittorio Alfieri.

The beautiful 14th century cloister to the right of the Basilica of Santa Croce leads to the Pazzi Chapel, one of the most important works of Italian Renaissance architecture, started in 1443 by Filippo Brunelleschi and completed in 1461.

The Museum of the Opera of Santa Croce stands beside the church and, apart from Pazzi Chapel includes the two magnificent Cloisters and the Refectory, which contains masterpieces like the great Cimabue Crucifix, badly damaged in the 1966 flood, a beautiful Last Supper painted on the end wall Taddeo Gaddi and other works by Andrea Orcagna, Bronzino and other artists.

Piazza Santa Croce

The huge rectangular square, one of the busiest in Florence, was where the population once listened to the preaching of the Franciscan friars or watched tournaments, like the Florentine football game, still played here even today. Note the statue of Dante: the great bard is not buried in Santa Croce, but in Ravenna, where he died. Leaving Piazza Santa Croce, continue along Via dei Benci, where you can find the Horne Museum, and explore Via de Neri, another lively shopping street, with the covered Loggia del Grano, where the ancient corn market was once held, on the left. Cross the Arno over the Ponte alle Grazie, which offers a splendid view of Ponte Vecchio.

V- San Niccolò

Via San Niccolò leads in the heart of this neighborhood, famous for its artists and writers and a very popular rendezvous during the summer months. The ancient Church of San Niccolò still retains its original Gothic structure and a Romanesque crypt, which can be seen when entering from the wine bar beside it. The ancient city walls of Florence and the Gate of San Miniato rise up in the vicinity.

VI – The Church of San Miniato

We now move outside the walls of ancient Florence, through the Gate of San Miniato, from where a path lined with cypress trees leads up to the Church of San Miniato al Monte. Its green and white marble façade is considered one of the finest examples of the Florentine Romanesque style. Built between the 11th and 13th centuries, it contains fine artworks such as the chapel of the “Crucifixion” by Michelozzo and the chapel of the Cardinal of Portugal both decorated by Luca della Robbia and the splendid frescoes by Spinello Arentino, depicting “Scenes from the Life of St. Benedict”.

Piazzale Michelangelo

The huge square of Piazzale Michelangelo is famous throughout the world for its view over the monumental city centre. The square, the gardens and the boulevards leading down to Florence, together with the other avenues encircling the city, were created by Giuseppe Poggi in 1869 when it was temporarily the Capital of Italy.