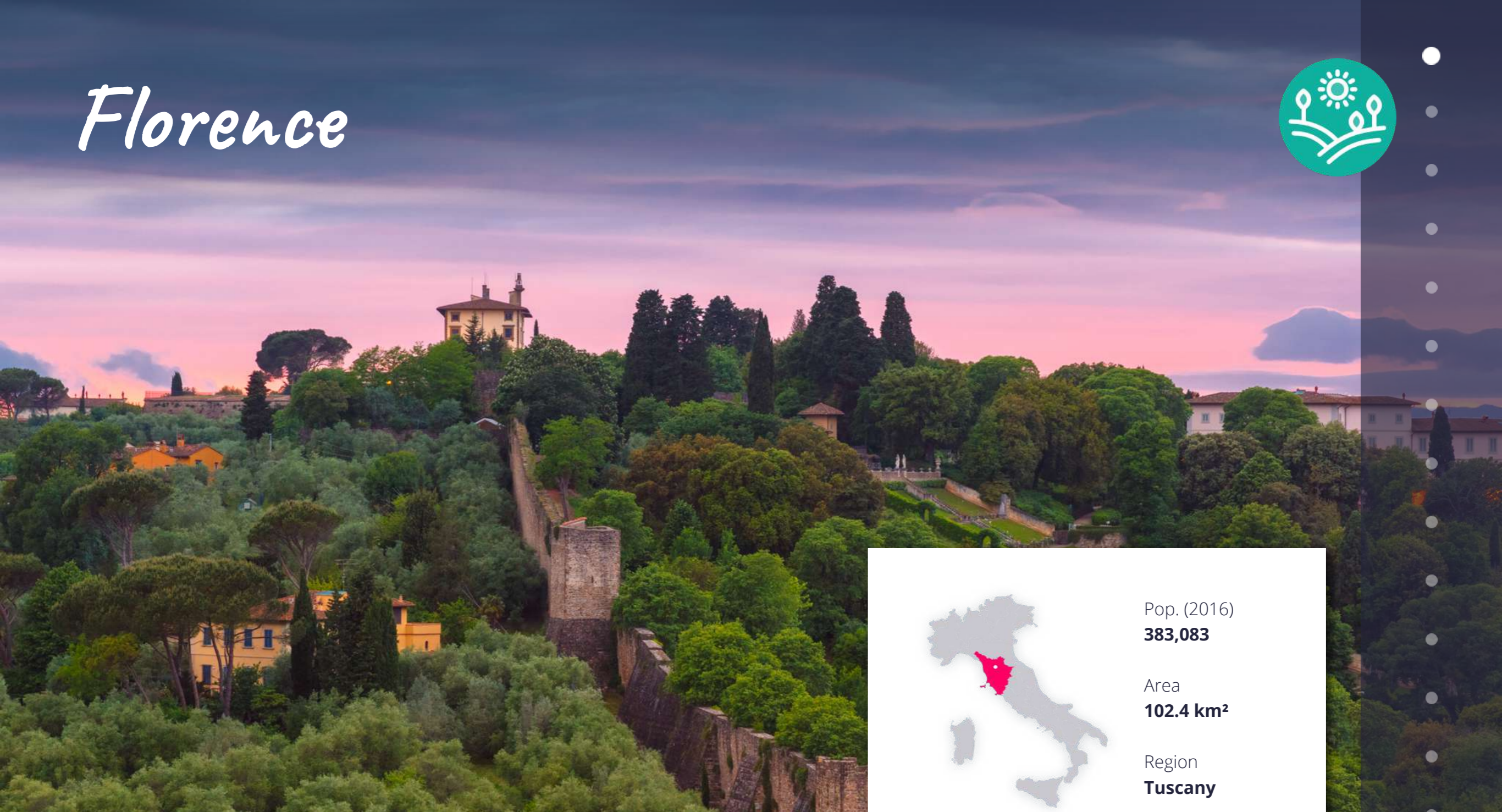


Florence



Pop. (2016)
383,083

Area
102.4 km²

Region
Tuscany

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Unlock the remarkable capital city of Tuscany with ItaliaRail's handy city guide to culturally-rich Florence. Savor a rich and varied culinary tradition, accompanied by superb wines for every taste. And take in breathtaking architecture, artistic masterpieces and legendary artisanal craftsmanship — all in Florence, the cradle of the Renaissance.

Florence



What you need to know before you go

For centuries, the Tuscan capital of the Renaissance has been delighting visitors with the richness of its cultural and artistic heritage. Here you'll find everything from Michelangelo's David at the Galleria dell'Accademia to Botticelli's Birth of Venus, Michelangelo's The Holy Family, and Caravaggio's Bacchus, all at the world-famous Uffizi Gallery. And who can forget the Boboli Gardens at Pitti Palace or the spectacular view from the thousand-year-old church, San Miniato al Monte?

But there is much more to discover and experience when visiting a destination often referred to as a living museum: opera, scenic walks, contemporary art, a thriving food scene, verdant countryside getaways and much more. Make sure to give yourself more than just a few hours to take it all in.

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When to go

Florence is packed with crowds in the high season, which runs roughly from the beginning of Easter weekend until late September. Spring and fall are wonderful times to enjoy the city — either in full bloom or during harvest season.

January and February are ideal times for those who avoid crowds. However, keep in mind that during popular week-long trade fairs in January and June accommodations will be filled to capacity.

Summer remains the busiest time; any hotel or visit to the Uffizi or Accademia should be booked in advance. July and August bring scorching temperatures — being outdoors in the afternoon can be a sweaty affair, so plan accordingly. Finally, many locals flock to the coasts and the mountains in August, leaving the city to tourists. This means restaurant and store closures (though rarely in the area near the Duomo).

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How to pack

Florence typically exhibits all four seasons, so you'll want to keep an eye on the temperatures the week before you arrive. For example, some summers can be blazing hot while others a touch milder. Always bring comfortable walking shoes, an umbrella and a scarf (to keep your neck warm and to cover up when entering church). Italians generally dress up. Sticking to business casual is a pretty safe bet when it comes to choosing your wardrobe.

Florence



Get around on foot

The easiest way to enjoy Florence is to arrive by train or bus. This way, you don't have to worry about finding (expensive) parking in the center or getting hit with steep fines if you accidentally drive into the ZTL (restricted driving zones).

The city's Santa Maria Novella Train Station is located in the historical center, as is the bus station. Nearby is the San Lorenzo neighbourhood, home to the popular Mercato Centrale food area and a large fresh produce market.

Florence is very pedestrian-friendly. By signing up with MoBike, the new bike-sharing app, you can easily hop on a bike and pay only 50 cents for every half hour of use.

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Don't limit yourself to the area around the Duomo

To best enjoy Florence, we recommend venturing out on foot to some of the outlying areas that most visitors miss.

While the Oltrarno (other side of the river) is hardly a secret, you'll find a more authentic neighborhood feeling across from the Ponte Vecchio, especially the further you walk toward San Frediano. The Pitti Palace museum is one of the best museums in Florence, and the Boboli and Bardini gardens are both well worth a visit.

Other treasured neighborhoods include Sant'Ambrogio, with its fantastic fresh market, authentic trattorias, and one of the most beautiful synagogues in southern Europe. Also on the other side of the river is San Niccolò, where you can see the panoramic Piazzale Michelangelo, the Rose Garden, and a beautifully-preserved tower gate that is open to visitors during the summer.

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Visit Florence's less famous museums

Once you're done with the main attractions, we recommend visiting a bevy of other museums in and around the historical center. We would start with the most notable churches, formerly the seats of power of the entire city: Santa Maria Novella, Santa Croce, San Lorenzo, and the Duomo Cathedral.

Another unique spot is the Bargello Museum, a former prison turned sculpture gallery, home to Donatello's David and other impressive early works by Donatello. Children will enjoy the Palazzo Davanzati on Via di Porta Rossa, an authentic medieval home that gives visitors a glimpse into domestic life during the middle ages in an old tower house.

For more off-the-beaten-path gems, head to the Stibbert Museum, the Specola Museum, the Innocenti Museum, Santa Trinita Church, Santo Spirito Church, and Brancacci's Chapel.

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Discover the city's apothecary past

Florence is home to Italy's oldest operating pharmacy (and one of the oldest in the world), Officina Profumo-Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella. It was established in 1221 by the Dominican monks at Santa Maria Novella, who grew herbs and remedies for their infirmary.

The pharmacy is like a museum, with impressively vaulted ceilings, ornate gildings, notable artworks, stained-glass windows, a tea room and beautiful frescoes. You can still buy the monks' natural products and time-tested botanical recipes, including fragrant soaps, perfumes, rose tonic, lotions and elixirs.

Another ancient pharmacy, lesser-known but still very impressive, is the Santissima Annunziata Pharmacy on Via dei Servi and Via di Porta Rossa. Dating back to 1561, it's a lovely apothecary in its own right, producing a selection of skin care and beauty products.

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Not all gelato is created equal

Legend has it that gelato was created by a 16th Century poultry butcher named Ruggeri. He invented it for Catherine de Medici, who liked it so much that she took him with her to Paris.

There is plenty of great gelato in Florence; here are a few pro tips on what to avoid:

- Color: a pistachio gelato shouldn't be bright green. Real artisanal color is more subtle than its fake friends.
- Ingredients should be listed or at least known by the shop staff.
- Gelato should be made on site: make sure the gelato isn't in huge mounds but instead in circular or rectangular steel containers.

A few of the best places for gelato in Florence include My Sugar, Perchè No, Vivoli, Il Procopio, Gelateria della Passera, La Sorbettiera, Gelateria de Neri, Gelateria de' Medici and I Gelati dei Bondi.

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Florence for Inferno fans

Inferno, the film based on Dan Brown's 2013 novel of the same name, was released worldwide in 2016. If you are a fan of Brown's Robert Langdon series, you already know that the novel and film are set in Florence. You may want to explore the book and movie locations, which touch on both famous landmarks and lesser-known sites in the Tuscan capital.

For those not familiar with the story, here is a quick overview: Harvard symbology professor Robert Langdon follows a trail of clues tied to the great medieval poet Dante. When Langdon wakes up in an Italian hospital with no recollection of what has happened, he teams up with Dr. Sienna Brooks, who he hopes will help him recover his memory. Together, they race across Florence and Europe to foil a deadly global plot.

[Read more on ItalyMagazine](#)

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Discover the best kept secrets of the Tuscan countryside

With all the city of Florence has to offer, it can easily become necessary to escape the thousands of tourists visiting the Italian Renaissance capital. Create your personalized Tuscan holiday with our insider travel tips on day trips, points of interest and hidden hotspots.

The “secret” destinations in the Tuscan countryside offer a unique view of a more relaxed Italian lifestyle. Explore the article below to learn about five off-the-beaten path destinations around Florence.

[Read more on ItaliaRail](#)

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What to bring home from Tuscany

For many of us, Tuscany is the destination of a lifetime. Florence lures travelers with its must-see masterpieces: Michelangelo's David, the treasures of the Uffizi, and the city's many monuments. In the Tuscan countryside we are seduced by the arts of the table: the region's simple, hearty, delicious cuisine and its famous wines.

With so many obvious attractions to experience, it's easy to overlook Tuscany's true unsung heroes: traditional artisans. These masters of leather, wood, stone, gold, and other materials toil away in quiet studios creating handmade shoes, beautiful pottery, inlaid stone and countless other marvels.

[Read more on ItaliaRail](#)

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★ Uffizi Gallery Skip-the-Line Tour

Our exclusive Skip-the-Line Uffizi Gallery tour guides you through the wonders of the Uffizi, featuring works by Raphael, Botticelli, Caravaggio, and Titian. Accompanying you will be an expert, English-speaking guide whose knowledge will illuminate the history and significance of these works.

Get ready for a life-changing cultural experience. Learn about the fascinating history of Renaissance Florence. Discover Giotto's revolutionary art, admire the beauty of Botticelli's Primavera and the sensuality of his Venere, surprise yourself with Leonardo's mix of rational genius and artistic creativity.

Learn more about the tour or book now!

Operates
Every day, (except Mondays) at 3:00PM

Duration
3.5 hr. (approx.)

Price
Adult \$69
Child (6-12) \$55

Please note there may be slight variations in pricing due to exchange rates.

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★ Accademia Gallery Skip-the-Line Tour

Our exclusive Skip-the-Line Accademia Gallery tour guides you through the masterpieces of the Accademia, including Michelangelo's David and works by Botticelli, Paolo Uccello and Andrea del Sarto and more. Accompanying you will be an expert, English-speaking guide whose knowledge will illuminate the history and significance of these works.

[Learn more about the tour or book now!](#)

Operates
**Every day,
(except Mondays)**

Duration
1.5 hr. (approx.)

Price

**Adult \$50
Child (6-12) \$35**

*Please note there may be
slight variations in
pricing due to exchange
rates.*

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★ Siena and San Gimignano Day Tour

Great for history buffs, foodies, and those with limited time to explore the Tuscan countryside, this day trip lets you experience the highlights of the region. Your group will visit the gorgeous cultural hub of Siena and the medieval hilltop town of San Gimignano. You'll also get to enjoy the area's cuisine with a traditional Tuscan dinner and vineyard tour in the Chianti countryside. Accompanying you will be an English-speaking guide whose knowledge enriches every aspect of your trip.

Learn more about the tour or book now!

Operates
Every day, 2PM

Duration
8 hr. (approx.)

Price
Adult \$200
Child (6-12) \$135

Please note there may be slight variations in pricing due to exchange rates.

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Florence is waiting for you...

As your train pulls into Florence's Santa Maria Novella station, your adventure in the Renaissance city begins. ItaliaRail is proud to support your Tuscan journey of discovery, and we trust that our informative guide will speed you towards a myriad of memorable experiences. Buon viaggio!