



# *Living in* **FLORENCE**

THE VERTO EXPERIENCE  
LOCATION GUIDE



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# Life in *Florence!*

Captivating, fascinating, and absolutely stunning, are all terms frequently used to describe Florence, and it is not an exaggeration! Florence is the birthplace of the Renaissance and home to award winning culinary delights, timeless and groundbreaking art, and is oozing with a deep passion for its culture.



# What will *Florence* be like?



The capital of Italy's Tuscany region, Florence is home to around 400,000 residents, but often hosts over 16 million guests every year, making this city vibrant and full of life.

Those choosing to study here can enjoy the impressive views of Brunelleschi's Duomo and walk the same streets that Dante, Michelangelo, and Leonardo walked while seeing outstanding works of art around every corner.

Known as a culinary city, especially for Tuscan cuisine, Florence has amazing restaurants, coffee shops, and bars on practically every block. Though it's a bustling city, it's a very manageable size and is extremely walkable (about one hour on foot from one end to the other). You can reach beautiful parks, gardens, and the rolling hills surrounding the city's edge quickly on foot or by bus.

Sitting at a café and hearing many different languages is the norm in Florence, where locals mingle with the permanent and tourist international community. Historically, Florence was one of the stops of the so called "Grand tour": beginning in the late sixteenth century, it became fashionable for young aristocrats, artists, and intellectuals to visit Florence as the culmination of their classical education and many of them decided to permanently move to Florence not only for its beauty, but for its wonderful quality of life. No wonder why Florence is now a popular international study location and is known both for its multicultural atmosphere and spectacular city center full of art and history!

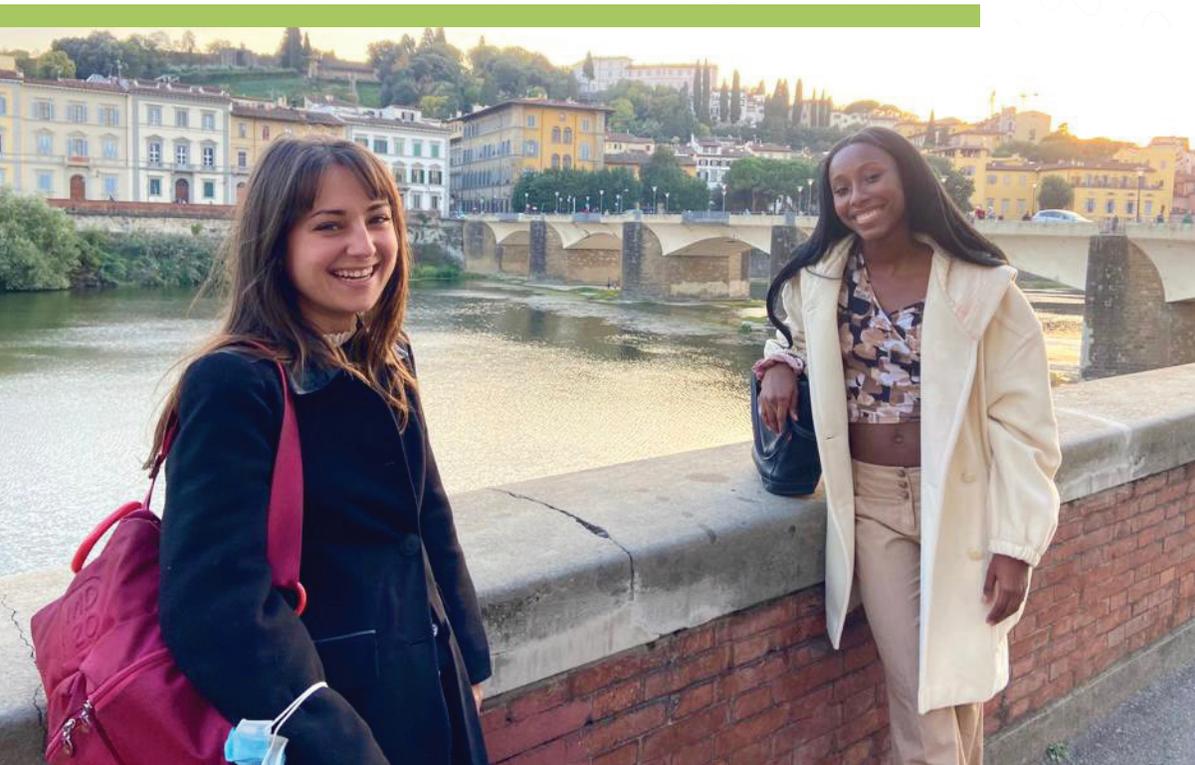


## What Will *Florence* Be Like? Cont.

Florence's historical city center is a UNESCO heritage site and its buildings are protected with few-to-no modifications allowed. Your housing will certainly be different than you are used to as many of Florence's buildings are quite antique, and no one apartment will likely be the same as another. Elevators are very rare and so is air conditioning. Sharing an apartment with new people can also seem daunting when you first arrive; you will need to be flexible to ensure you all get along.

Italians have a social culture that strongly values community. This means that there are festivals and fairs most weekends that draw huge crowds. With Florence's lively events and the many incredible tourist attractions, you will have an endless list of opportunities to explore!

Getting out of our comfort zone and attempting to learn a new language can be a life-changing experience. Most days you won't miss life back home - there is just so much to do and see! Just the walk to and from your apartment will be more than enough to remind you how lucky you are to be here!



# Neighborhoods *in Florence*



Florence's historical city center, where you will be spending most of your daily life, has been divided up into four quarters for centuries: Santa Maria Novella, San Giovanni, Santa Croce, and Santo Spirito.

Your housing will be in one of these quarters and you'll find you can easily reach friends across these neighborhoods with just a short stroll. These sections of the city are highly popular, and even more popular in the summer when these quarters face off each year in a tournament of Calcio Storico, an ancient game that is a blend of rugby and soccer. Every game is anticipated by a parade made up of more than 530 people who take to the streets in old Florentine costumes.

**Santo Spirito** An artist's haven, Santo Spirito is a lively blend of students, expats, and artists. The piazza hosts a daily market where you can pick up local produce. In the evening, the piazza is transformed into a lively mix of young locals and tourists enjoying aperitivo or pizza on the steps of the church. Including the larger area of San Frediano, this is considered the coolest neighborhood in the world by some.

**San Giovanni** In the San Giovanni quarter you'll find incredible historical monuments all within walking distance! Home to the Accademia Gallery, and therefore, Michaelangelo's David, this neighborhood is crowded with tourists by day but peaceful and residential at night. One of the shining gems of this neighborhood is the botanical garden, a welcome oasis of green in the desert of stone and plaster that makes up the center of Florence.

**Santa Croce** Situated along the eastern border of the city center, Santa Croce is home to the best produce market in Florence, Sant'Ambrogio. Open daily, except for Sundays, you'll find the most delicious produce for the best price here. Santa Croce is also home to the fabulous and famous Cibreo restaurant group; early fall evenings at Café Cibreo are the epitome of Italian living.

**Santa Maria Novella** Santa Maria Novella is the first neighborhood to greet visitors after arriving via the railway station. You will enjoy losing yourself among the streets of the Santa Maria Novella neighborhood, between via de 'Tornabuoni, via della Vigna Nuova and piazza della Repubblica... the streets offer a wide and varied selection of restaurants and shops for all budgets and tastes.

Today full of both luxury high-end brands and much more affordable new and second hand stores, the area originally became vibrant during the early 19th century when the many historical cafes were patronized by the top writers, artists, and intellectuals.



# Why *Florence*?

- **Size of the city!** Sometimes described as delightfully compact, the center of the city was designed by architects in the centuries for walking while a network of public buses and the tram can connect you with the larger metropolitan area. At the end of your semester, you will know all of Florence like a local!
- **Fantastic food!** Look forward to exploring the world-famous food scene– from traditional local trattorias and the street food delicacies of the tripe and “Lampredotto” sandwiches, to open-air markets and local cafes with more contemporary cuisine. Plus, a delicious gelato will make every day a sweet one!
- **International vibe while very local!** You will be able to both merge with local students and residents as well as with the international community while simply sitting at a café or joining one of the many cultural experiences offered both by Verto and the city itself.
- **City surrounded by countryside!** Outside of its quaint cobblestone and renaissance art, Florence is popular for its fascinating countryside. Whether by car, foot, or bike you will be able to immerse yourself in beautiful natural sceneries and culturally rich villages.



## *Florence* as your Classroom

The historic city center, an incredible Renaissance gem, will become an extension of your classroom as you dive into your experiential education experience. Many of your classes will offer site visits throughout the city and beyond– imagine studying art history while face to face with the world’s greatest works or diving into conversations about society in the midst of ancient ruins! You’ll dive into globally relevant issues ranging from identity and immigration to multiculturalism and contemporary life, using this ancient and vibrant city as a case study.



# Packing for your *Experience*

Here are some helpful tips for smart packing as part of your experience:



- **Don't pack more than you can carry!** You may have heard this before, but it becomes a reality when you arrive and need to carry your suitcases
- **Be selective in what you pack!** Space is of a premium in Florence and storage space may be limited in your residence. The more you pack, the less personal space you will have.
- **Don't pack things that you can easily purchase on site.** Also, keep in mind that some electronics (for example, hair irons or electric toothbrushes) might not work due to voltage issues.
- **Pack good walking shoes.** You'll be grateful after a day of exploring the cobblestone streets and hills of Florence!
- **Change some USD to EUR.** We recommend bringing some Euros (maybe \$150 USD worth) with you from the U.S. so you have some cash on arrival for travel if you need it or in case you have any issues with your card. There are ATMs at the airport, and around the city, but make sure to inform your bank that you are traveling and that your card is set for international withdrawal and payments.
- **Ensure that your phone is UNLOCKED.** Purchasing a local sim card is the most affordable option, but your phone needs to be unlocked to accept the new sim card. Make sure to visit your local provider before departure.



# The Arrival Process & Orientation

The Verto Florence team will support you in the arrival process and help you with all aspects of settling in. Staff will greet you at the airport upon your arrival and bring you to your accommodation via Verto-arranged transportation. When you land, find the Verto staff holding a Verto sign. If you wear your Verto T-shirt that day, it will make it even easier for the staff to find you at the arrival hall!

During your first week in Florence you'll enjoy a thorough orientation, including a tour of your local area, community events, training on how to navigate the city and transportation, and conversations around health and safety information, and academic expectations. Verto Florence staff are also here to support you throughout your experience, and to help you adjust as you learn and grow!



# SIM *Cards*

You will be able to buy an Italian Sim card when you arrive in Florence. We recommend this so that you have your own Italian number in case you want to call other Italian numbers. That way you are not charged international call fees. The main phone companies in Italy offer many different plans for students and tourists and your on-site staff can explain where to purchase a SIM card. Alternatively, you will need to set up an international plan with your phone carrier before departure.



# Getting Around *in Florence*

Walking is a great way to see the city and all the little hidden gems of art and architecture. Your peers and classes will be within walking distance.

You can walk from one end of the city to the other in an hour, but most places are in about a 10-25 mins radius. Bike sharing, bikes for rent, and electric scooters are available but watch the pedestrian traffic! If you are curious about taking the tram or train, your on-site staff can help provide more information.



# Budget *Guidelines*



Daily life is affordable as food at the market and grocery store is very cheap. Eating out will cost you a bit more, so be sure to factor that in to your budget.

Meals are not included in the Florence experience and you are required to purchase your own groceries, cleaning, and personal supplies. You will have access to a fully equipped kitchen to prepare meals.

Based on feedback from past Florence Verto participants, we estimate an average cost of groceries and eating out was \$50-150 (USD) per week according to personal budget, with the average meal out costing \$20-25 (USD). Non-Verto arranged social activities are estimated at about \$30-\$90 (USD) per week, and personal expenses (clothes, home goods, souvenirs) are an average of \$50 (USD) per week. Optional independent travel can cost anywhere between \$60-\$250 (USD) per week.

You can enjoy a rich experience in Florence on a wide range of budgets and your Verto staff will be there to support you in budget-building that's tailored to your needs, priorities, and goals.

## *Your* Academic Center

You will travel from your accommodations to class daily, as most local Italian students do. The Florence Academic Center is NOT a campus, but a large building housing classrooms, student social space, and staff offices. This is the more common type of "campus" in Italy.



If you have any other questions, don't hesitate to reach out to your Student Onboarding Advisor.

*We can't wait to welcome you to **Florence!***



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