



14

OFF-THE-BEATEN-TRACK *Florence* MUST DOS



Florence is one of those destinations that shows up on many a bucket list. It's also a fantastic place to visit with kids. Who doesn't want to visit the Uffizi, stroll across the Ponte Vecchio, stand before the original David, and climb up inside Brunelleschi's famous dome? But great as these experiences seem in the imagination, in reality they draw the biggest crowds and the longest queues, especially if you haven't booked tickets in advance.

So to keep you from spending precious holiday time standing in line, I've created a list of 14 off-the-beaten-track-Florence-Must-Dos, with the help of my fellow Florence-loving friends Susan Eaddy, Julie Hedlund, Mary Hoffman, and Paul Zelinsky.



01 THE VASARI CORRIDOR

The Path of Princes



At the moment you can only access Vasari's elevated corridor, The Path of Princes, as part of a guided Uffizi tour although there are moves to make it open to the public. Built for Duke Cosimo the 1st of Florence, it runs above ground from the Palazzo Vecchio to the Pitti Palace via the Uffizi, Ponte Vecchio, and Santa Felicita church. This way, Cosimo the 1st could walk from his offices (uffizi, in Italian) to his palace home without suffering from the smells of the butcher and fishmonger stalls on the busy bridge.



THE PIAZZA SANTISSIMA ANNUNZIATA

Monastery Turned Hotel

02

"The most beautiful and the least known square in Florence," this piazza is almost entirely overlooked by tourists. The old monastery turned hotel is where da Vinci painted the Mona Lisa. And both the Ospedale degli Innocenti (orphan hospital) and the matching church façade were designed by Brunelleschi.

Treasure hunt for the "foundling wheel" where one could place an unwanted baby and with a half-turn of the wheel, deliver him or her inside the orphanage without being seen. Also, check out the bees on the equestrian monument, designed by Giambologna.

03

THE BADIA

Across From The Bargello



A 10th-century abbey boasting over 1,000 years of history, the Badia sits smack dab in city center yet is often overlooked by tourists. Treasure hunt for the wonderful Fillipino Lippi painting, Apparition of the Virgin.



04

CHURCH OF SAN MICHELE VISDOMINI

In the Via dei Servi



A much-overlooked church in the Via dei Servi, it houses Pontormo's mannerist-style *Sacra Conversazione*.

MUSEO DI FIRENZE COM'ERA VIA ORIUOLI

Behind Brunelleschi's Dome

05



Tucked behind Brunelleschi's dome, this little museum tells the story of Florence through a series of paintings from the Renaissance through to the 19th century.

06

THE PIAZZA DEL LIMBO

Outside the Church of Santi Apostoli

This tiny square outside the Church of Santi Apostoli is where babies who had died before being baptized were buried once upon a time. Legend has it that when the rich banker Bindo Altoviti wanted to raze the church and rebuild it, Michelangelo convinced him to restore it. Today it is one of few churches in Florence to have maintained its High Middle Age features.

07

BRANCACCI CHAPEL

of Santa Maria del Carmine



This is where Pietro Torrigiano broke Michelangelo's nose, disfiguring the master sculptor forever. The two boys were arguing about Masaccio's frescos, which even today are a revelation!





08

SCRIPTORIUM

Toward the Duomo



On your way toward the Duomo from the Piazza Santissima Annunziata, check out this shop housed in a medieval building that makes handmade paper and leather-bound books.

CEMETERY AT SAN MINIATO

Church with a View

09

Standing atop one of the highest points in the city, the view from this church is spectacular. It's also a fascinating place. Join the monks for an evening of relaxing and mysterious chanting.



10

LA SPECOLA

in the Oltrarno



A true oddity, this natural history museum boasts wax figures - more than 800 of them! - used for medical education in the late 1800s.

11

BORGO OGNISSANTI

The Treasure Hunt

This whole street is quiet and residential. There's a quirky drug store on the corner called Munstermann's that has a "guide" to men's facial hair. They will mix a custom perfume for you from essential oils. But the real thrill is treasure hunting there for the two St. Jeromes, the Botticelli, and the Ghirlandiaio. Good luck!





12

FORT BELVEDERE

16th Century Design



Forte di Belvedere is a rambling fort designed at the end of the 16th century. It's a great place for views over Florence and marriage proposals. ;)

13

VILLA DEMIDOFF

a Small Versailles

An easy bus ride out of Florence, this lovely park - variously described as "a small Versailles" and "a theater of delights, magnificence, and leisure" - is home to the wonderful Giambologna giant.

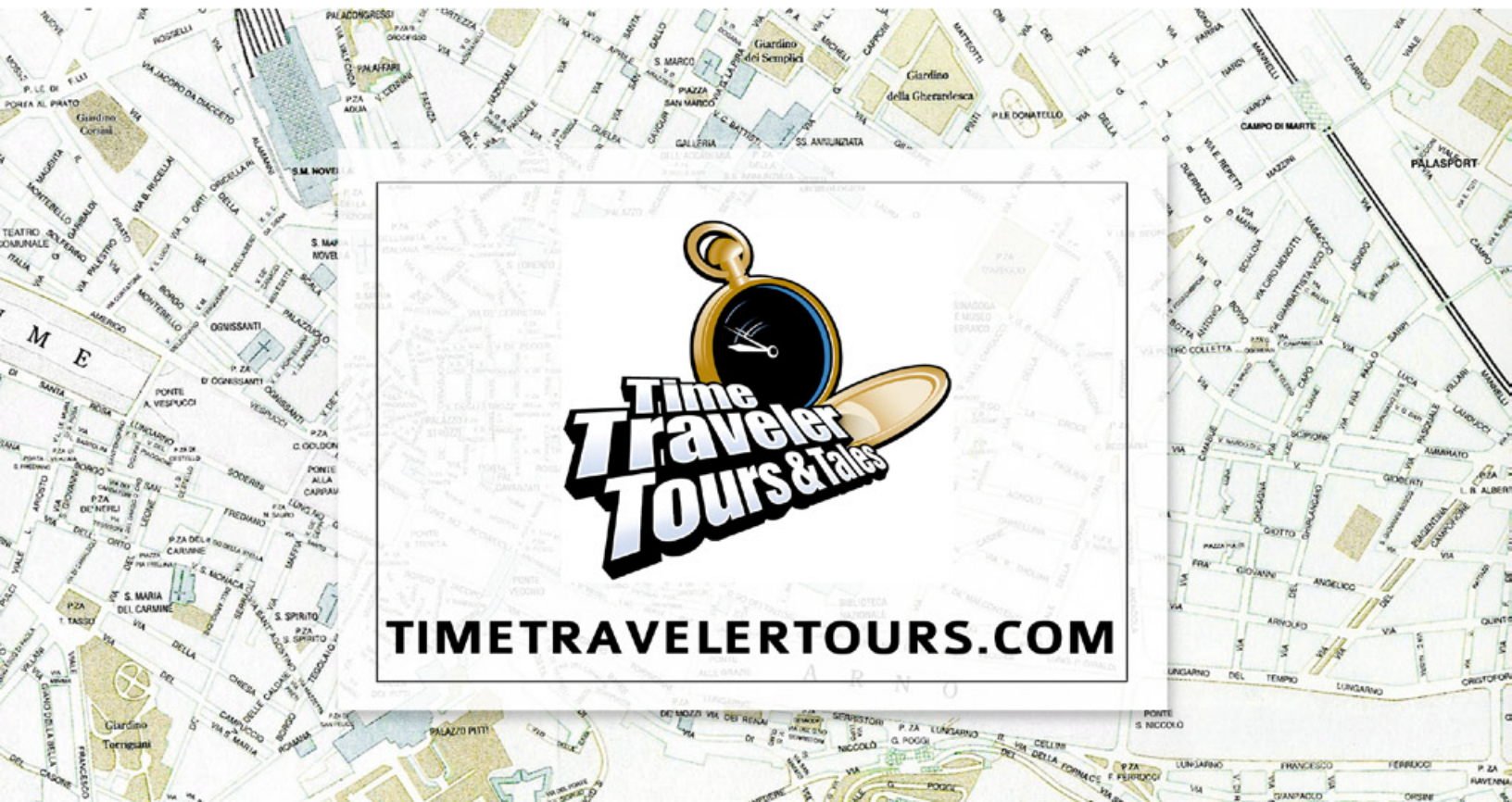


GELATERIA LA CARRAIA

Best Gelto

14

Don't forget to treasure hunt for the best gelato in Florence. Our bet is that you'll rank this one among the best, if not THE best.



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