



Varsity Travel
THE SCHOOL TRAVEL EXPERTS

***Itinerary For a Four Day Art & Classics Study Tour
to Florence. Prepared For Prepared For Mrs. C.
Evans, Dean Close School, Shelburne Rd,
Cheltenham, Glos GL51 6HE***

Dates: 30th March – 2nd April 2019



The itinerary is designed to balance visits of the greatest interest with recreative activities. It aims to make the maximum use of time without exhausting participants. The itinerary we have proposed is flexible and is only finalised after discussion with the Group Leader(s). Flexibility is also built into the tour itself as changes can be made at very short notice according to weather conditions etc. The tour can be guided throughout. All excursions are well prepared and are backed by notes and a commentary. The Tour Guide is very knowledgeable about the city being visited and is able to help to run the tour according to Group Leader wishes. In this way Group Leaders will be free to concentrate on the care of their pupils rather than on the organisation of the tour. The whole stay is underpinned by excellent accommodation, catering, transport and security.



ACCOMMODATION

Hotel Eden***

Via Nazionale, 55 - 50123 Firenze (ITALIA)

Phone: +39 055 483722 or +39 055 475451. Fax: +39 055 489478 E-Mail: info@hoteleden.firenze.it

The Hotel Eden is located on the popular Via Nazionale in central Florence. Close to the market of San Lorenzo, the exhibition centre (& venue for Kanye West's wedding!) of Fortezza di Basso & the historic sites of the Duomo, Piazza della Signoria & Ponte Vecchio, the hotel is perfectly situated for our groups visiting Florence.

The building has been recently renovated & each room has direct dial telephones data port, WI-FI broadband internet connection, safe, satellite TV & air conditioning. The ensuite bathrooms have a shower and hairdryer. The owners Beatrice & Francesco head a friendly & helpful team & we have found the Hotel Eden to be a comfortable & popular base for our groups visiting the Florence region.

CATERING

The catering in Florence proves to be a highlight for many of the groups that have joined us.

En Route

We ask parents to supply a packed lunch for the outward journey. On the final day, lunch is the final meal provided by Varsity Travel so participants should keep £5 for an evening meal.

Breakfast

A continental breakfast of croissants, bread, butter, jam, coffee, tea or hot chocolate is served either in the main or the group dining room.

Lunch

For lunch, the Tour Guide will distribute lunch money to students before taking the group to a particularly good area of the city for cafes, restaurants, pizzerias & pasticcerias. Participants will have a wide choice of food & can either purchase a panini sandwich & a drink, enjoy a pizza on the terrace of a restaurant or try a bowl of pasta from one of the many good outlets. Of course, every meal should be completed by a visit to one of the many gelaterias where participants can choose from 30 different flavours of the best ice-cream in the world. The use of lunch money has proved to be very popular with students as it provides an opportunity to explore, try the local food & converse with the locals who are always friendly & helpful. The Tour Guide will take staff to one of the local trattorias where they will be able to savour local foods such as risotto with cheese, spaghetti alla carbonara or a crusty pizza cooked in a wood-burning oven.

Dinner

Evening meals are a time for participants to experience authentic Italian food in 'La Grotta di Leo' - a busy and lively restaurant that is a popular haunt for locals. Pupils will have a choice of many typical Italian dishes including risotto dishes, a choice from 22 different traditional wood-baked pizzas, canelloni, lasagne, pesto dishes and salads. Mineral water & fresh bread will be served with the meals. Local chianti will be served for staff & older pupils, at party leaders' discretion. This lively restaurant has proved to be immensely popular with our groups and is flexible enough to cope with all dietary requirements.

DAY ONE

- 07.00 Coach arrives at Dean Close School.
- 07.20 Depart Dean Close School. Coach transfer to Bristol Airport.
- 08.00 E.T.A. Bristol Airport for check in.
- 11.00 Easyjet flight 8233 departs Bristol Airport.
- 14.10 E.T.A. Pisa International Airport.
(Please note: Continental time is 1 hour in advance of British time)

While waiting for the bus transfer to Florence, students will have the opportunity to change money, purchase drinks & snacks, use the toilets or visit the airport shops prior to transferring to Florence.

- 15.00 Coach transfer to Florence.
- 16.10 E.T.A. Florence. Walk to Hotel Eden.
- 16.45 E.T.A. Hotel Eden. Check-in & allocate room keys.
- 18.00 Walk to La Grotta di Leo Restaurant.
- 18.30 **Dinner at La Grotta di Leo Restaurant, Via Della Scala.**
- 20.00 **Initial Evening Walking Tour of Florence.**

Our walk to The Hotel Eden will take us past the Florence Duomo, Baptistry & Belltower. Students will view these impressive monuments illuminated at night, giving them a taste of the sights they will see on the walking tour the following morning.

- 21.15 E.T.A. Hotel Eden.

DAY TWO

08.00 Breakfast.

09.15 Walk to Accademia Gallery.

Our tour guide will lead us past the Cathedral, Duomo, belltower & baptistry, stopping to explain the significance of the Renaissance to the city, its people & its culture.

10.00 **Visit to The Accademia Gallery.**

Founded in 1563, the Accademia holds many of Michelangelo's most important works. His most famous, '*David*', has dominated the collection since it was moved inside from the Piazza Signoria to protect it from pollution and the weather. This sculpture established Michelangelo as the foremost sculpture of his time at the age of twenty nine. Other masterpieces include '*The Four Prisoners*' - four muscular figures trying to free themselves from the stone and '*The Madonna of the Sea*'.

11.30 **Visit to The Medici Chapel.**

Dating from the 16th & 17th centuries, the Medici Chapel is located within the Basilica of San Lorenzo - itself an addition to Brunelleschi's 15th century church. The 'New Sacristy' was designed by Michelangelo & the chapel is the final resting place of the Medici - the rulers of Florence & much of Tuscany. Six grand sarcophagi remain empty while the remains of the Medici lie interred in the crypt below.

12.30 **Lunch in the San Lorenzo Food Market.**

Pupils will enjoy visiting the ancient San Lorenzo Food Market, with its stalls selling traditional Tuscan produce such as hand-made pasta, truffles, fresh olive tapenades, artisan bread & prosciutto ham. There are many market food stalls where pupils can sit & enjoy a traditional lunch. Alternatively some pupils may choose to purchase bread, cheese, meat etc. from the stalls & make their own picnic lunch.

13.30 **Exploration of The San Lorenzo Market.**

Students will enjoy exploring the ancient market of San Lorenzo, with its fine leather goods, hand carved Pinocchio figurines, clothes & fine silks. Students will learn the art of haggling with the market traders while exploring the various stalls & outlets.

14.45 Walk to Florence Operahouse.

15.30 **Guided Tour of The Florence Operahouse.**

Students will enjoy a guided tour of Florence's brand-new, cutting edge operahouse. Famous throughout Italy, the operahouse is itself a modern work of art & students will learn about the design of the building with respect to the amplification & acoustics of the performers & orchestra. The tour will include a visit to the backstage, the stage itself, the orchestra pit & the behind-the-scenes quarters for the cast & crew. This visit will be of particular interest for drama & music students & is a new visit that we have added to our Florence itineraries since the opening of the new operahouse.

17.00 Walk to La Grotta di Leo Restaurant.

17.30 **Dinner at La Grotta di Leo Restaurant, Via Della Scala.**

19.00 **Guided Walking Tour of Florence.**

Participants will enjoy some stunning views as we walk along the narrow, medieval streets to get to the Duomo and Baptistry, Giotto's Belltower and along the ancient Roman passageway that leads to the Piazza Signoria - the heart of Florence and Tuscany. Here, pupils will be able to see the following sculptures outside the Vecchio Palace: Ammanati's controversial '*Neptune Fountain*' (Michaelangelo said 'what a lovely piece of marble you have ruined!' upon seeing this work), Michelangelo's '*David*', Bandinelli's '*Hercules*' and '*Cacus*' and '*The Rape of the Sabine Women*' by Giambologna. From the central piazza, we will walk the short distance to pass over the Ponte Vecchio - the only bridge to survive the German retreat from the region during WW2. Many pupils enjoy sketching the wonderful view over the River Arno, or the Ponte Vecchio itself.

19.45 **Gelato Ice-Cream on The Piazza Signoria.**

Students will enjoy the opportunity of photographing & sketching the central square of Florence – the Piazza Signoria – with its imposing castle, loggia & statues including the David by Michelangelo. Students will enjoy purchasing a gelato from one of the outlets lining the square. The tour guide will offer students the chance to win free ice-creams as prizes for completed sketchbooks, correct quiz questions etc.

20.45 Walk to Hotel Eden.

21.00 E.T.A. Hotel Eden.

DAY THREE

08.30 Breakfast.

09.30 Walk to Brancacci Chapel.

Our walk to The Brancacci Chapel will take us across the historic centre of Florence, past the Duomo, across the Piazza Signoria & across the Ponte Vecchio - the ancient Roman bridge spanning the Arno River.

10.00 *Visit en-route:* **Visit to The Piazza Santo Spirito**

On the way to the Brancacci Chapel we will pass through the Piazza Santo Spirito. Located in the middle of the artisans' quarter of Oltrarno from where Pinocchio was created, the square boasts a simple & plain church façade that was to be worked on by Michelangelo but which never came to pass as he departed to Rome before completing the work. We will have time to enter the Church of Santo Spirito as well as visit the local market stalls which sell local produce from honey to fruit & vegetables, local olive oil & wooden creations as well as the odd antiques stall.

10.30 **Visit to The Brancacci Chapel**

Located in the church of Santa Maria del Carmine, the Brancacci Chapel is famous for its frescoes of The Life of Saint Peter, completed after 50 years in 1480. Masaccio's use of perspective & the tragic realism of the figures in '*The expulsion of Adam & Eve*' were ground-breaking at the time & placed him at a great level of importance during the Renaissance.

11.00 Walk to Piazza della Repubblica.

11.30 **Lunch & Exploration of the Piazza della Repubblica.**

Students will enjoy exploring this busy former Roman market square, with the famous Hotel Savoy, Rinascente Department Store & historic cafes lining the perimeter.

12.45 **Visit to The Uffizi Gallery.**

The Uffizi is the oldest gallery in the world and was built in 1560 as offices for the Tuscan Administration ('Uffizi' translates as 'offices'). Pupils will enjoy a guided tour of the museum and will see such works as '*The Birth of Venus*' and '*Primavera*' by Botticelli, Michelangelo's '*The Holy Family*' and Titian's '*Venus of Urbino*'. The museum displays its paintings in a series of rooms off the horseshoe shaped main corridor. The works are shown in chronological order to reveal the development of Florentine art from Gothic to High Renaissance. show the focuses on gothic art, the early renaissance and culminates in various paintings from the High Renaissance.

Walk to The Piazza Signoria.

14.45 Walk to Florence Cathedral.

15.00 **Visit to The Florence Cathedral, Crypt & Baptistry.**

Conceived in 1293 & aiming to match the Pantheon in Rome, the Florence cathedral & Dome took over 140 years to complete. The original plans included the hugely ambitious idea of building the world's largest dome despite no technology existing at the time to complete such an undertaking. Undeterred, the committee commenced the building work & left the conundrum of the domed roof open & exposed for decades while they calculated how to achieve its construction.

With over 4 million bricks weighing over 40,000 tonnes, almost half a football pitch wide at the base & standing over 10 stories high, the Florence dome is the largest masonry structure in the world. This epic achievement of the Florentines signalled to the world their sophistication, power & wealth.

Students will also admire the golden doors of the Baptistry by the 23 year old Filippo Brunelleschi who had won a competition against the city's best metalworkers & goldsmiths. Now known as 'The Gates of Paradise', the gates depict scenes of Abraham killing his son. On losing the competition, Michelangelo left Florence for Rome where he would work on his life's masterpiece - The Last Judgement in The Vatican.

Students will gaze in awe at the interior of the Florence Duomo by Vasari showing *The Last Judgement*. Painted over 9 years & covering an area of 3,600 metres, the scenes are gruesome & graphic.

16.30 **Ascent of Brunelleschi's Duomo.**

The sheer size of Florence's cathedral was typical of Florentine determination to lead in all things. Completed in 1436, Brunelleschi's dome dwarfs even the great buildings of ancient Rome and Greece. As pupils enter through the main entrance, they will be impressed by the Neo-Gothic facade made from local Tuscan marble. Pupils will climb to the top of the dome, from where spectacular views of the city can be enjoyed.

Afterwards many of our groups enjoy some free shopping time in the centre of Florence, or the opportunity to enjoy a cafe latte and a cake in one of the many terraced cafes.

17.45 Rest & relaxation time in Hotel Eden.

18.45 Walk to La Grotta di Leo Restaurant.

19.00 **Dinner at La Grotta di Leo Restaurant, Via Della Scala.**

20.30 Walk to Hotel Eden.

20.45 E.T.A. Hotel Eden.

DAY FOUR

08.00 Breakfast & storage of suitcases in hotel storage room.

09.30 Walk to San Marco Convent.

10.00 **Visit to The Convent of San Marco**

Founded in the 13th Century, the Convent of San Marco contains simple cloisters & monks' dormitory cells decorated with a remarkable series of devotional frescoes from *The Life of Christ* by Fra Angelico, designed to inspire prayer & contemplation. The intimate cells show the artist's mastery of perspective in scenes such as The Annunciation (c.1445).

11.30 Walk to San Lorenzo Market.

11.45 **Lunch & Final Recreation Time in the San Lorenzo Market District.**

Students will enjoy purchasing their lunches from the enormous catering hall in the San Lorenzo Foodmarket. After lunch they can visit the market to make final purchases before the transfer to the U.K.

13.45 Walk to The Boboli Gardens.

14.15 **Visit to The Pitti Palace and Boboli Gardens**

The Pitti Palace was the Medici's summer palace for when the stifling heat & humidity of the Tuscan summers made the central palaces unbearable. The Boboli Gardens were designed for the Medici in 1549 and are an excellent example of stylized Renaissance gardening, with clipped hedges and sculptures along the tree-lined walkways. The gardens were designed to give elevated vistas over the city and Duomo below. This will be a relaxed & welcome final visit, allowing students to admire the city from afar while enjoying a drink or gelato amongst the cooling lakes & grottoes of these ornate gardens.

15.45 Walk to Hotel Eden.

16.15 E.T.A. Hotel Eden. Collect suitcases & prepare for return transfer to U.K.

17.00 Walk to Florence Coach Station.

17.30 E.T.A. Florence Coach Station. Check-in for our bus departure.

17.45 Coach transfer to Pisa Airport.

19.00 E.T.A. Pisa Airport. Commence check-in.

21.30 Depart Pisa International Airport on Easyjet flight 8238.

22.45 E.T.A. Bristol Airport.

(Note: Continental time is one hour in advance of British time)

23.30 Onward coach transfer to Dean Close School.

00.15 E.T.A. Dean Close School.

Please note that this itinerary is a guide only. We make hotel & airline bookings upon receipt of the initial deposit payments. The airline timings & airports contained within this itinerary serve as a guide only & may change. The choice of hotel, airport & flight timings are confirmed upon receipt of initial deposits.

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