



A One-Day Journey to Florence: Personal Hints.

Florence is very close to Bologna and can be conveniently reached in one day (of course a true visit would require staying much longer, visiting museums, churches, ... Florence would really deserve several days of staying). You can travel by train (it takes about 40 m with the high speed rail). Trains leave for Florence hourly from the railway station in Bologna. Tickets can be purchased at the station. A one day ticket will cost about 20 EUR.

This is my personal set of suggestions for you if you dedicate only one day to Florence, moving from Bologna after PIMRC.

Once the train is in Florence, and you leave the station, the city centre is on your right. Start walking, and within two minutes you will be in *Piazza di Santa Maria Novella*. Visit the church: though less renowned than others, it deserves your time. Afterwards, any tourist tour would move to the most worldwide known monuments and museums in Florence: *Cattedrale di Santa Maria del Fiore*, *Piazza della Signoria*, *Galleria degli Uffizi*, *Ponte Vecchio*, *Chiesa di Santa Croce*. Indeed, you should definitely visit those places. Nevertheless, I assume you will have another chance to visit them, and I will make a different proposal: to spend your time walking uphill in the direction of a church (and a view) which is unique: *Abbazia di San Miniato al Monte*.

Leaving *Piazza di Santa Maria Novella*, take the narrow *Via delle belle donne*. In five minutes you will reach *Via de' Tornabuoni*, the perfect place for Italian high-class shopping (Gucci, etc). After you have spent more than 1,000 EUR for your preferred small gift, move south along *Via de' Tornabuoni* in the direction of the Arno river. Once you are on its side, you will immediately recognize *Ponte Vecchio* (on your left). Walk in that direction, and cross it, and when you are on the other riverside, turn left. Reach the next bridge and continue walking along the riverside, till when you get to *Piazza Nicola Demidoff*, with a small garden on your right. Then, take the narrow streets on its right: *Via dei renai*, then *Via dell'olmo* and *Via di San Nicolò* (maybe you know that in Florence on 1966 a flood covered part of the city ... in this area you can find signs on the building walls that show the level reached by water) and start moving uphill through *Via San Miniato*. At some point the street will turn into stairs... keep climbing. Forty minutes or more of walking after you left *Ponte Vecchio*, you will reach one of the most beautiful sightseeings in Florence: *Piazzale Michelangelo*. Take a stop, breathe, some refreshment and some photos. That sight is not something you find in other cities.

Abbazia di San Miniato al Monte is ten minutes by walk from there; giving your back to the amazing view of the city, you have to walk on the right for a few minutes. At some point in time you will see a steep staircase on your left. Climb it, and you will be in front of one of the oldest churches in Italy, dating back about 900 years. A Romanic church, perfectly kept. A very particular kind of church, you will notice this once inside, with the altar located several meters above the ground level. Visit it, in the silent atmosphere you will find. Outside, enjoy again the sightseeing on the city. Finally, take your steps down back to the chaotic city centre and visit the rest of this amazing city.

Needless to say, if you can stay more days, it will be much better. *Galleria degli Uffizi* is one of the most important museums in the world. If you do not buy the ticket online in advance, you might queue at the entrance for one hour or more. If you buy it, you still have to queue, but normally it takes about ten minutes. The visit would require a minimum of two hours, up to several days if you are an expert of arts...

Having lunch in Florence is a complex issue. The crowd of tourists makes it impossible to enjoy the Tuscanian cuisine. So, I suggest you stay for the evening, even if you intend to move back to Bologna at night. There are late trains, so this will not be a problem. In this case, you might choose some *trattoria* or restaurant close to *Piazza di Santa Maria Novella* and the train station. A perfect place for a "fiorentina" (a steak) and a bottle of *Chianti* would be *Ristorante Buca Lapi* in *Via del trebbio* (be prepared to pay up to 100 EUR for a dinner there). Otherwise, there are nice *trattoria* in the vicinity, with a warm and cheaper atmosphere. One I love is *I' Tuscani 2* in *Via dei federighi*: tables are so small and close each other, and wine so good, that it will be impossible for you to leave the place without new friends...

Roberto Verdone

