A guide to Florence
Florence is situated on the plain of the River Arno. Magnificent is the old town (UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1982): it has buildings of significant architectural and historical value as well as an extensive number of works of art. During the period of the Medici dynasty, between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, Florence enjoyed its heyday. The place is known worldwide as the "cradle of the Renaissance", having contributed to the development of this period. In the city they were born, have lived and worked for many of the greatest artists of this movement and thanks to them, the Tuscan capital is visited every year by millions of tourists. Between the end of 1200 and the beginning of 1300, the city established itself as one of the most important centers of Italy thanks to the presence of artists such as Giotto and Dante Alighieri. In 1348 the plague struck the city: it was a very difficult period. At the end of '300 and civil strife occurred in the meantime began to establish the prestige of the Medici family. The Medici family were distinguished different figures. What prevailed was most certainly that of Lorenzo de' Medici, called the Magnificent: he allowed the city to get a certain prestige in the whole of Europe in the artistic, cultural and economic. It was the capital of Italy from 1865 to 1871. During the Second World War the city was occupied by the Germans for a year. 4th November 1966 is remembered by the Florentines as the day of the Florence when much of the town was flooded by the river Arno.
CHURCHES

Church of Santa Maria Novella
In this church you can notice the Florentine Romanesque style with two-tone white and green marble with geometric designs on the outside and one inside the Gothic style. Its construction was started in 1246 and the beautiful facade was revived in the middle of the fifteenth century by Leon Battista Alberti. Inside is the crucifix by Giotto and works of Masaccio and Uccello. Santa Maria Novella was the center of the Dominican order in Florence.

Brunelleschi’s Dome Piazza del Duomo
It’s the most famous building in Florence, symbolizes the great tradition of cultural and civic awareness of the city. The completion of the works of the great work lasted a long time: in 1434 the dome was finished. The construction was started in the summer of 1420. The lantern dates from the years 1445 to 1461. The structure is really impressive: it has a diameter of 45.52 meters and a height, without lantern, of 91 meters.

Church of Santa Maria del Carmine
Imposing facade stands out with a rough stone in the square of the Carmine. The church was founded in 1268 and finished in 1476, and became particularly famous for the Brancacci Chapel with its frescoes by Masaccio and Masolino. Was devastated by a fire in 1771 and rebuilt internally by Giulio Mannaioni in 1775 following a design by Giuseppe Ruggieri. It also houses paintings by Vasari.

FLORENTINE KITCHEN

In Florence there aren’t only churches, museums, monuments, palaces: the city is also famous for its culinary traditions. Each tourist can try one of the many restaurants or taverns in the city center which give him the possibility to taste some of the most famous dishes. Its cuisine it’s known all over the world especially for its bread made without salt. Accompanied with other tasty ingredients it becomes the basis for many recipes. But the pride of Tuscan cuisine, and in particular to the Florentine, is the famous Florentine steak, at least three centimeters high and topped with extra virgin olive oil, salt and pepper.
Historic Florentine Football

The Calcio Storico Fiorentino and an ancient game, which was already practiced by the legionaries of the Roman Florentia, such as athletic training. The Historical Football was played on the day of carnival or special occasions, in the main city squares. Today you play three matches, two semi-finals and a final, which must take place June 24, the feast of St. John. During the tournament, preceded, according to the sixteenth-century tradition, a parade of more than 500 people in costume, challenge teams of the four historic districts of Florence: the "Green" for the district of St. John, the "Reds" for what Santa Maria Novella, the "Blue" for the Holy Cross, and finally the "Whites" for the district of Santo Spirito. The team at the end of all the matches scores the most goals, receives a prize heifer.

Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore
It was built starting in 1296 and concluded in the fifteenth century with the creation of the dome by Filippo Brunelleschi. The interior of the church is an unmissable show with beautiful frescoes, sculptures and marble floor. The paintings on the dome form the most extensive mural cycle with known sacred subjects. Among the artists who have helped to beautify the church we can cite Paolo Uccello, Andrea del Castagno, Giorgio Vasari and Federico Zuccari.

Church of San Lorenzo and the Medici Chapels
The church of San Lorenzo is the oldest of Florence. It was consecrated in 393 by St. Ambrose and dedicated to the martyr Lawrence. And it’s considered one of the best buildings of the Renaissance. The facade remains unfinished even though there was a project of Michelangelo that was never realized. The old sacristy and work of Brunelleschi and Donatello and decorated with frescoes. It houses the Medici Chapels housing the graves of 50 members of the noble Florentine family.

Baptistery of San Giovanni
It’s placed in front of the Cathedral and its octagonal construction, dates back to the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Characteristic and the two-tone finish with slabs of white and green marble. The 3 magnificent bronze doors by Andrea Pisano and Lorenzo Ghiberti have a greatly impact. It was built to worthy receive the baptismal font of the Cathedral; internally you can see the splendor of the mosaics that cover the entire dome and the vault of the tribune.
Squares

Piazzale Michelangelo
Designed in 1869 by the Florentine architect Giuseppe Poggi, Piazzale Michelangelo offers a beautiful panoramic view of Florence and the Arno. This sumptuous terrace and typically nineteenth century. Poggi realize the square as a monument to the celebration of Michelangelo and his works, which were to be exhibited here.

Piazza Santa Croce
The square, which formerly consisted of a real island formed by two branches of the Arno, was born with the aim to contain the crowds of faithful who listened to the sermons of the Franciscan friars. Area being very large and regular in shape, in the Renaissance became the ideal place for knightly jousts, parties, shows and competitions popular as football in costume, which is still held there every June.

Piazza della Signoria
It was the heart of Florentine political life since the fourteenth century. The Square and witnessed all the major and most significant political events such as the return of the Medici in 1530. In this square that Savonarola was charged with heresy and burned at the stake. Among the many statues that adorn the Piazza Michelangelo's David (copy) was placed in front of the Palazzo Vecchio to symbolize the power of the Florentine Republic in contrast to the tyranny of the Medici.

What to do...

In the evening
In the area preferred by the Florentines to have a drink and enjoy some snacks and that of the Arno river, where every night, but especially on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, the pub are literally besieged. For those who prefer to chat at the table in front of a succulent steak and a glass of wine, the historic center offers several renowned restaurants or traditional taverns. With the summer season, then, opportunities for fun night multiply: squares, parks, gardens, and hidden corners of the city, they turn into big and small stages for events that can really please everyone.

At the weekend
For lovers of nature and tranquility, the Cascine Park is the right choice. Once a space dedicated to the beats hunt of Alessandro and Cosimo I de'Medici, now the park is the perfect place to spend your weekend, walking through the green fields, release one based in the shade of a tree, or doing a little healthy sport. This large green space is very popular in the summer months, especially by cyclists, joggers and people who want to spend some time relaxing, away from the crowded downtown.
Fountain of Neptune
In 1559, Cosimo I de' Medici calls a contest to create the first public fountain in Florence, which was attended by the most important Florentine sculptors of the time: he was chosen the Neptune dell'Ammannati. It was inaugurated on the occasion of the marriage of Francesco I de' Medici and Giovanna d'Austria in 1565. The Neptune in marble, with the traits of Cosimo I de 'Medici, stands on a pedestal decorated with statues of Scilla and Cariddi.

Ponte Vecchio
From the old bridge is possible to enjoy a picturesque landscape, one of the most beautiful and romantic of all Florence, visited every day by a myriad of tourists. The Ponte Vecchio is the oldest part of town, the only miraculously spared from the destruction of World War II. It houses the goldsmith shops that have replaced those that were once butchers and greengrocers.

Boboli Gardens
The Florentines like to spend their free time in the Boboli Gardens, to escape the chaos of the city and to breathe the glory and grandeur of the de 'Medici family. It contains works and buildings documenting the taste and magnificence of this family that was the sole owner of this wonderful green space until the middle of the eighteenth century.

Palazzo Strozzi
Of imposing size, is one of the most beautiful Italian Renaissance palaces. The Strozzi family was exiled from Florence in 1434 because of his opposition to the Medici, but thanks to the fortune accumulated by Filippo Strozzi as a banker in Naples, came back to the city in 1466 with the aim of raising the largest building that ever seen in Florence. It was started in 1489, but finished after some time. Today it houses the great art events.

Palazzo Pitti
It was built around 1450 by Luca Pitti designed by Brunelleschi who was commissioned by the same ten years earlier. The structure of the building and typically Renaissance carved stone from the hills of Boboli. Today and home to many of the most prestigious museums in Florence, including the Modern Art Gallery and the Palatine Gallery with frescoes by Pietro da Cortona.

Palazzo Vecchio
Built in 1299 and designed by Arnolfo di Cambio, was at that time the seat of the Priors of the Arts then became the fifteenth century, the seat of the Signoria, from which it derives its name. It was also the residence of Cosimo I de' Medici and was decorated internally by Vasari, by Ghirlandaio and Bronzino. The palace of great importance to the city of Florence and its majesty is its symbol.
Galleria degli Uffizi
The name comes from the fact that at the time was to accommodate the "offices" of the judiciary. At that time, the Grand Duke of Tuscany Cosimo de Medici had the dominance of fate and some of the rooms to house the art collections of the family. In the museum, now one of the most visited in the world, with works by Giotto, Leonardo, Botticelli, Michelangelo and Raffaello.

Gallerie Palatine
The Gallery is situated on the left side of the Pitti Palace and was created between the late eighteenth and early decades of the nineteenth century by Lorraine that they placed in the halls masterpieces from the collections of the Medici. A beautiful collection that includes works by artists such as Raphael, Rubens, Caravaggio, Titian, Pietro da Cortona and other Italian and European masters of the Renaissance and the seventeenth century. The magnificent vaults are decorated by Pietro da Cortona.

Accademia Gallery
It’s famous in the world thanks to the presence of sculptures of Michelangelo; the most important is the “David”. The Accademia Gallery was founded by the will of the Grand Duke Leopold of Lorraine, who decree the constitution in 1784 to house a collection of old paintings and modern sculpture in order to facilitate the understanding and study to young students from the nearby Academy of Fine Arts.

Dante’s house – Museum
In the historic center of Florence in 200, between the church of S. Martino and Piazza dei Donati, stood the houses of Dante Alighieri. In the early years of the twentieth century, was built the house where Dante was born. Here is situated the Museo Casa di Dante, which contains the testimonies of his public life and his painful period of exile.

Heaven’s Gate
Made by the goldsmith and sculptor Lorenzo Ghiberti between 1425 and 1452 and one of the most famous works of the Renaissance and is the east gate of the baptistery. Consists of ten square panels that tell more than fifty episodes whose general theme and that of salvation. Considered from its place as a masterpiece of bronze sculpture, was greatly admired by Michelangelo, who gave him the name by which the famous and still today.

Arco di Trionfo
Built in the eighteenth century by architect Jean-Nicolas Jadot, the bow wanted to celebrate the entrance of the Habsburg-Lorraine, after the extinction of the Medici family. While a plaque on the inside, dated 11th November 1916 and dedicated to King Vittorio Emanuele III, emphasizes the power assumed by the people as a result of unification of Italy.