Cradle of the Renaissance, romantic, enchanting and utterly irresistible, Florence (Firenze) brims full of world-class sights, restaurants and attractions. Here’s our guide to its more offbeat charms.

**SIGHTS**

**Badia Fiorentina**

(jerusalem.cef.fr/it/firenze-la-badia)

Delve into the Florence of the past in this 10th-century abbey in the city centre. Pop by for their daily choral service at 5.30pm, or get here earlier to explore the quiet cloister and purchase souvenirs from the shop selling soaps and condiments made by the clergy.

**Museo Novecento**

(museonovecento.it)

Florence’s fantastic modern-art museum is in a 13th-century convent once used as a pilgrim shelter, hospital and school. A well-articulated itinerary guides visitors through modern Italian painting and sculpture from early 20th century to late 1980s. Installation art is on the first-floor loggia; fashion and theatre get a nod on the second floor; and the visit ends with a montage of the best films to have been set in Florence.

**ACTIVITIES**

**500 Touring Club**

(500touringclub.com)

Hook up with Florence’s 500 Touring Club for a guided tour in a vintage motor, with you behind the wheel. Every car has a name in this outfit’s fleet of vintage Fiat 500s. Motoring tours are guided (hop in your car and follow the leader) and themed.

**EATING**

**In Fabbrica**

(IN ITALIAN EEE)

(fabbrica.pampaloni.com)

In Fabbrica, located a mile beyond the southern city gate of Porta Romana, fuses Florence’s outstanding tradition of craftsmanship with its equally fine cuisine. Meaning ‘In the Factory’, In Fabbrica is just that. Workers from third-generation Florentine silver house Pamplonai lunch here; then, later on, the speakeasy canteen opens its doors to culturally curious diners. Book ahead.

**La Toraia**

(STREET FOOD)

(latoraia.com)

‘Bringing the countryside to the city’ is the motto of this cherry-red artisan food truck. Parked riverside, a 15-minute stroll east of Piazza di Santa Croce, the truck serves burgers crafted from Chianina meat sourced at the family farm in Val di Chiana and topped with melted pecorino. A bunch of tables, chairs and loungers by the river cap off the experience.

**Osteria il Buongustai**

(OSTERIA)

(Via dei Cerchi 15r)

Run with breathtaking speed and grace by Laura and Lucia, this place is unmissable. Lunchtimes heave with locals who work nearby and savvy students who flock here to fill up on tasty Tuscan home cooking at a snip of other restaurant prices. It’s brilliantly no frills – expect to share a table and pay cash.

**DRINKING**

**Mad Souls & Spirits**

(facebook.com/madsoulsandspirits)

At this bar of the moment, cult alchemists Neri Fantechi and Julian Biondi woo with their expertly crafted cocktails, served in a tiny aqua-green and red-brick space that couldn’t be more spartan. A potted cactus decorates each scrubbed wood table; and the humorous cocktail menu is the height of irreverence. Check the ‘Daily Madness’ blackboard for specials.

**Santarosa Bistrot**

(Facebook.com/santarosabistrot)

The living is easy at this hipster garden bistro-bar, snug against a chunk of ancient city wall in the flowery Santarosa gardens. Comfy cushioned sofas built from recycled wooden crates sit beneath trees outside; food is super; and mixologists behind the bar complement an excellent wine list with serious craft cocktails.

**Todo Modo**

(todomodo.org)

This contemporary bookshop with a hip café and pocket theatre at the back makes a refreshing change from the usual offerings. A salvaged mix of vintage tables and chairs sits between book- and bottle-lined shelves in the café, called ‘UqBar’ after the fictional place of the same name in a short story by Jorge Luis Borges.

**SHOPPING**

**Officina Profumo-Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella**

(smnovella.it)

In business since 1612, this perfumery-pharmacy began life when Santa Maria Novella’s Dominican friars began to concoct cures using herbs cultivated in the monastery garden. The shop, with an interior from 1848, sells fragrance, skincare products, ancient herbal remedies and preparations for everything from the relief of heavy legs to improving skin elasticity and mental energy.

**SHOPPING**

**Gelateria Pasticceria Badiani**

(latordaia.com)

‘Bringing the countryside to the city’ is the motto of this cherry-red artisan food truck. Parked riverside, a 15-minute stroll east of Piazza di Santa Croce, the truck serves burgers crafted from Chianina meat sourced at the family farm in Val di Chiana and topped with melted pecorino. A bunch of tables, chairs and loungers by the river cap off the experience.

**Don’t miss**

Known throughout Italy for the quality of its handmade gelato and sweet pastries, Gelateria Pasticceria Badiani is in the Campo de’ Marte neighbourhood just outside the city centre but is – as any local will tell you – well worth the walk. The house speciality is Buontalenti gelato, a creamy concoction with flavourings that are a heavily guarded house secret (buontalenti.it).
Sleeping

**Hotel Dalí**
Best for a friendly stay (hoteldali.com)
A warm welcome from hosts Marco and Samanta awaits at this lovely hotel. Not far from the Duomo, it has 10 sunny rooms, some overlooking an inner courtyard. No breakfast, but (miraculous for downtown Florence) there’s free parking in the rear courtyard. The icing on the cake is three gorgeous self-catering apartments, one with a Duomo view.

**Hotel Davanzati**
Best for a convivial atmosphere (hoteldavanzati.it)
Twenty-two steps lead up to this family-run hotel, a labyrinth of enchanting rooms. Rooms come with mini iPads, meaning free wifi around town, direct messaging with the hotel and a handy digital city guide. Complimentary aperitivo, served in the lounge between 5pm and 7pm, brings an opportunity to mingle with the family and other guests.

**Ad Astra**
Best for character and charm (adastrafirenze.com)
Within a 16th-century palazzo overlooking a truly vast private walled garden, there is no other address quite like this in Florence. Ad Astra sports 14 beautiful rooms adorned with calligraphy, vintage collectables, claw-foot bathtubs and the occasional 19th-century fresco or wooden herringbone floor. Four rooms open onto the large, impossibly romantic terrace.

**MAP KEY**
- **SIGHTS**
  - 1 Badia Fiorentina
  - 2 Museo Novecento
- **ACTIVITIES**
  - 3 500 Touring Club
- **EATING**
  - 4 Gelateria Pasticceria Badiani
  - 5 In Fabbrica
  - 6 La Toraia
  - 7 Osteria Il Buongustai
  - 8 Mad Souls & Spirits
  - 9 Santarosa Bistrot
  - 10 Todo Modo
- **SHOPPING**
  - 11 Officina Profumo-Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella
- **SLEEPING**
  - 12 Ad Astra
  - 13 Hotel Dalí
  - 14 Hotel Davanzati

**FURTHER READING**
Our Pocket Florence & Tuscany guide has much more info (£7.99) or download the Florence content for free on our Guides app.