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## **Be a Renaissance Man**

Florence. Classical Italian. From the artworks of the Uffizi, through the fashion giants of Ferragamo, Gucci and Cavalli, and on down to the ancient bridges that span the river Arno, it is a city redolent with Italian and European history.

Stand upon Giuseppe Poggi's Piazzale Michelangelo, a nineteenth-century hillside terrace overlooking the city from its elevated position south of the Arno. Gaze across and take it in. From Forte Belvedere to Santa Croce, Florence is a city that inspires, that draws you in. The magnificent view is crowned by the dome of Brunelleschi's Basilica di Santa Maria del Fiore, known simply as 'il Duomo'. To stand at the foot of this architectural masterpiece is to feel, sense and appreciate all that is great about Florence. Towering over 300 ft and with a neo-Gothic façade intricately adorned in green, red and white marble, it is something that you could gaze upon for hours, stood stock-still in wonder as the people weave past you, making their way through the Piazza Duomo by as they have done for centuries. Chattering with friends or silently lost in their own plans, occasionally gazing up as they pass through the basilica's knowing shadow.

Eat as a Florentine would eat. You don't have to be a descendent of the Medici to savour the best of what the Tuscan capital has to offer. An evening meander through the narrow medieval streets enables you to discover the local trattoria, where you can carve your way through a succulent bistecca Fiorentina or spoon yourself a mouthful of the hearty pasta e fagioli – a soup crowned with the local cannellini beans. The following night, as you seek to soak up more of the magic of the city, you can wend your way out on to wide open squares such as the Piazza degli Antinori or the slightly more boho Piazza di Santo Spirito to enjoy aperitivo – a glass of Negroni (a three-way of gin, sweet Vermouth and Campari) accompanied by olives, fresh fruit and salame.

Florence is a city to savour, in which to feel cool. To feel welcome - that you really are a part of the world. The culture works its way into you in osmotic fashion as soon as you step outside and makes such an impression as to engrain itself in your mind for all time.

Firenze. Do your soul a favour and take it there.

**By Ross Lowe**

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