



*Guest Correspondent JKMCL, Pittsburgh PA:* Florence is one of Europe's most intriguing destinations, and each time I visit, I discover something new. I've visited many cities across Europe, and Florence is a favorite for its historic and artistic charm. In Italian, the city is Firenze.

To walk the streets as they were 400 or 500 years ago, visit the same historic buildings, see the same skyline, is truly incredible. While other cities have grown and modernized, the historic heart of Florence remains as it has been since Michelangelo lived and worked there. This feeling of immersion in historic culture is a reason I always enjoy Florence. On our most recent visit, Florence was a 48-hour stop during a Mediterranean cruise. The ship docked at the port of Livorno, 60 miles up the coast, and we were taken by bus to Florence, with an hour's pause along the way in Pisa to see the famed Leaning Tower.

Lufthansa, Air France, Alitalia Delta and other major airlines service Florence Airport (FLR). It allows for easy access from the U.S.

Piazza della Signoria, home of the Palazzo Vecchio, is a great place to start your city tour. It's the historic 14th Century center, surrounded by magnificent Renaissance sculpture, including a copy of Michelangelo's David.

A popular site is the Duomo atop the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, erected in the 11th Century. Go inside to experience the huge marble corridors and the shrine to John the Baptist. Nearby is the majestic Campanile, a soaring bell tower designed by Giotto. For about \$5 you can climb the 414 steps for an unobstructed view of Florence.

Visit the Galleria dell' Accademia, where works by Michelangelo, Giotto, Cellini and other

Renaissance painters and sculptors are on display. Stroll across the Ponte Vecchio, the city's ancient bridge over the Arno River, built in the 14th Century. Walking along the span, you'll encounter many interesting art and jewelry shops,

We chose to spend our night in the intimate, elegant Hotel Casci. It's actually a walk-up, the upper floor in the former mansion of Gioacchino Rossini, composer of, "The Barber of Seville". Hotel Casci, Via Cavour, 13, San Marco, Santissima Annunziata 50129, [hotelcasci.com](http://hotelcasci.com)

Near the Hotel Casci in the Ponte Vecchio area, and recommended by our hotel hosts, is a small, cozy cafe. We had an enjoyable dinner and local wine samplings. Every tasty dish was made from scratch, including beef lasagne, truffle ravioli and fresh fruit gelato to top it all off. Enoteca Pitti Gola e Cantina, Piazza de' Pitti, 16  
[pittigolaecantina.com](http://pittigolaecantina.com)