

Florence is like a beautiful pair of crafted shoes that are just a little bit too tight!



Florence appears to have too much of everything, including charm!

# ITALY 2022



## Florence

I am sitting on the bed now, writing this missive, listening to the clip clop of horses hooves on the street below and Siggy snoring (or maybe gently breathing) beside me. What a sanctuary after the “Very Best Exotic Marigold Hotel”!! Yesterday morning we made the laboured trip with our luggage to the local train station and then on to this abode in central, old Florence. The 500 year old apartment is owned by couple, Virginia and Michael. They stayed at our home about 5 years ago. We never really thought we would get to complete our end of the house swap, but here we are. Since arriving we have enjoyed the very smart updated interior, the

Florence has a subtle beauty when the day breaks and when the sun sets - muted colours glowing in the light. Pity about the bloody heat!!

presence of simple things like a kettle, to make a cup of tea when desired, and the expansive views across roof tops from our back balcony. It was an experience to see our undies flapping beside all the other intimately close clothes lines! Virginia arrived to greet us and gave us a great idea of where we are in relation to the main attractions. We are actually two blocks from the Arno. We lazed around for the afternoon and at 6.30 Virginia and Michael called in to take us for a quick orientation tour around the inner city. It was still very warm at that time, but getting bearable at least. How lovely it was to walk with them and to benefit from their vast local knowledge. They are both professional tour guides! The best views we had were right at the end of our walk when we arrived at the river bank and witnessed the sun set behind a very photogenic bridge. The famous Ponte Vecchio also looked amazing in the lower light of the evening. We then had pleasure in making up a crisp toasted sandwich for tea and had a good long sleep.

## Day 2 in the Heart of Florence

The Etruscans were thought to have had built a small settlement where Florence now stands, but it was Julius Caesar who founded the colony of Florentina around 59BC. The settlement was strategically placed on the narrowest crossing of the Arno, providing a link between northern Italy and Gaul (France). Today it is a sprawling metropolis, comprising monumental buildings (many raised by famous families such as the Medici's). Michael told us the inner city contains about 155 old castles. You need to look up, when walking around this city to see statues guarding the roof tops and the many obvious defensive structures.

This morning we were out of the apartment by 7.30. The aim was to beat the heat and the crowds and to see just a little more of the city. We made a bee-line back to the river and really enjoying walking along it, viewing the lovely, morning shadows. We concentrated our walk around the Ponte Vecchio and surrounding area and, whilst Sig stood in line for tickets we have reserved for the Uffizi this evening, I wandered the narrow streets near by. I came across an advertised concert for the Three Tenors (which we have since booked). By happenstance we saw Wayne and Shirley. There will obviously be a few Australians wandering around today.

After that we went into the Palazzo Vecchio Museum. The first floor was originally the seat of government in the time of the Medici's. Every surface had frescos — and there is a serious over abundance of naked male and female nymphs. We both had enough by 11am and headed back to our sanctuary.

*In Florence even  
the graffiti is  
ancient!!*



When you visit Florence all the paintings and sculptures you have seen in art books are all there - in real life. It blows your mind. They are absolutely everywhere you look!! Michelangelo, Leonardo, Brunelleschi, Botticelli and more. Then you realise there are castles and fortifications in and around Florence!! It's not all art!!







