

# DF

Destination  
Florence

**TOURISM/** POLICIES FOR SUSTAINABLE  
TOURISM IN FLORENCE

**THEATRE/** CARLO FUORTES SPEAKS  
ABOUT FUTURE OF TEATRO DEL MAGGIO  
MUSICALE FIORENTINO

**INTERVIEW/** PROFESSOR RINO  
RAPPUOLI AHEAD OF THE 8TH FLORENCE  
AMBASSADOR AWARD

**MICE/** CORPORATE AND CONGRESS  
TOURISM ON THE RISE IN FLORENCE

## THE STATE OF TOURISM



# DF

Destination  
Florence

## Issue 12

Autumn/Winter 2024

Free issue

As the official partner of the City of Florence and the Metropolitan City, its Founding Members, the Foundation aims to attract high-quality tourism, such as congresses and sports events, while managing the flow of individual visitors and temporary residents.

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Registrazione Tribunale di Prato  
n.4 del 12/09/2006

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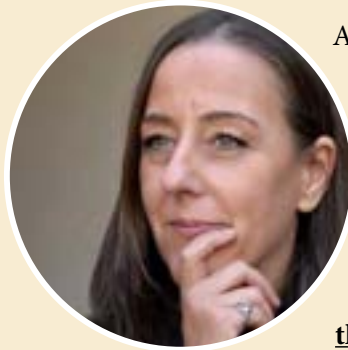


## Conquering the crowds





Ph. Marco Badiani



As Mayor of Florence, I am proud to see the great evolution that the city has undergone in recent years.

Our international scope, historical and cultural value, and capacity for innovation place us among the main European destinations. We are no longer just a destination of great historical and cultural value. In recent years, we have also distinguished ourselves by being able to attract **top-level international events in the fields of sport, culture and conference tourism**.

I am thinking, for example, of the enormous success of the Grand

Départ of the Tour de France. This success is the result of a well-defined strategy, targeted investments and a constant commitment to excellence. It's a strategy that's made up of various actions aimed at promoting "quality" tourism and encouraging the delocalization and deseasonalisation of flows. The recent transformation of the Convention & Visitors Bureau into Fondazione Destination Florence fits fully into this strategy, wholly supported by the Municipality of Florence as a founding member and by the Metropolitan City. In this way, we've equipped ourselves with a tool that capitalizes on a thirty-year heritage of professionalism and experience and that, above all, works for an increasingly effective synergy between the interests of businesses and the responsibilities of institutions in tourism management. Together with Destination Florence, we will work to plan and implement **strategic policies for managing flows** through collaboration between institutions, businesses and the academic and scientific community, paying particular attention to conference tourism and the entire Meetings, Incentive, Congress and Events (MICE) sector.

Florence does not need promotion, but **sustainable tourism** that respects its identity and makes the city welcoming for those who visit it as well as for those who live here. The real challenge for our city, therefore, is to try to 'govern' the so-called **overtourism** to ensure that tourism continues to be an important economic asset while limiting its impact on the quality of life for Florentines. We can overcome this by committing ourselves to proposing events and projects that also enhance lesser-known sites, with the aim of decongesting the historic center, and investing in 'slow' tourism, which also puts the extraordinary nature that surrounds Florence at its center, as well as the paths that cross our city. The recently relaunched **#enjoyrespectfirenze** campaign, aimed at raising awareness of respectful and responsible behavior among those who visit our city, also goes in this direction. Only by promoting **effective coexistence between residents and tourists** can we face this challenge. It's truly a hospitality pact between Florence and its visitors, which reflects our commitment to conscious and respectful tourism. With everyone's collaboration, we will continue to make Florence a beacon of innovation, culture and hospitality, capable of shining on an international level.

**Sara Funaro**

Mayor of Florence.

# Assessing and improving tourism in Florence

Florence and similar destinations have had the word “**overtourism**” dominate the related press in recent months, with cities like **Barcelona** and **Venice** reporting public action in efforts to remedy the current trends. In terms of Florence, estimates for total arrivals from January to July, 2024, are the highest ever recorded, even higher than in 2019, with an increase of 11% for the same period in 2023 (**Centro Studi Turistici**). A constant increase in foreign tourists compared to a drastic decrease in domestic tourism is another statistic worth noting, with one of the main challenges affecting the city being the concentration of tourist flows in the historic centre, in particular in the UNESCO area, which welcomes the vast majority of visitors. It’s estimated that **95% of tourist presences are concentrated in 5% of the city**, creating strong pressure on infrastructure and the urban environment. Related to this are issues around housing prompted by the high demand for short-term rentals, an issue that **Sara Funaro, Mayor of Florence**, seeks to resolve with a resolution to stop additional spaces being dedicated to rentals of this kind. We speak to **City Councillor for Economic Development, Tourism, Fairs and Congresses, Jacopo Vicini**, to hear more about the tools being used to analyze and react to tourism in Florence.



**How have tourist flows evolved over recent years, and what are the main challenges that the city is facing in relation to the tourism sector?**

After the crisis linked to the COVID emergency, tourist flows have started to increase once more, and even if they are not yet aligned with pre-pandemic levels, the trend is positive both for Florence and for the municipalities in the tourism sector. International flows are growing with a high presence of foreigners, in many cases non-European. The real challenge in terms of tourism is to reconcile the development of an important sector with the liveability of a city such as ours and the protection of the needs of those who live here. It’s not so much a question of numbers that are returning to pre-Covid levels as a question of perception of the phenomenon that has a significant impact on people’s quality of life. So-called ‘overtourism’ is now a central theme for all large national and international cities, and the challenge of the coming years will be to implement the best strategies to govern it.



**What are the main initiatives undertaken by the Municipality to limit the impact of mass tourism and ease pressure on the main points of interest in the city?**

It's something that requires multiple actions, and that is what we are currently engaged in. We have a targeted information and awareness campaign, **#EnjoyRespectFirenze**, with a survey of residents to evaluate the repercussions and therefore have adequate information in order to intervene appropriately. The promotion of tourism that also gives prominence to neighboring municipalities and less frequented destinations to decongest the historic center is required, with targeted effort to attract events and conferences that favour a deseasonalization of flows. Mayor Funaro's first act was to reintroduce the block on new short-term tourist rentals in the UNESCO area in the operational plan, a measure that aims to protect this delicate part of the city and put a stop to an increasingly widespread phenomenon that also has consequences on accessibility to housing and on the commercial fabric.

**Are there exchanges with other European destinations that are facing similar situations?**

The city of Florence has been an active participant in various discussion tables for years, both at an international level (Eurocities network, partnership with the cities of Amsterdam and Barcelona on the topic of overtourism and tourist rentals) and at a national level, thanks to the ministerial project by the **Grandi Destinazioni Italiane per un Turismo Sostenibile** (Venice, Florence, Rome, Milan and Naples). From the ongoing discussion, the need for national-level regulation clearly emerges, which would also be aligned on a European scale, then adapted to the needs of each destination.

**Do you think that some initiatives could be replicated here too, for example, the implementation of a regulation system for access to main tourist sites?**

More than regulation in the strict sense, I believe we should talk about the pressing need for teamwork with those who manage the main "attractors" of the city to jointly develop strategies for the delocalization and deseasonalization of flows, with the aim of "spreading out" presences at different times of the year. A city like Florence cannot ignore its main attractions, they're known throughout the world. It's about combining the so-called "must see" with lesser-known sites, focusing on increasing the average stay in the city, and differentiating the tourist offering that can combine the city of art with an immersion in nature, alternative itineraries, the most authentic villages and much more. Differentiating the offer also means attracting different targets of tourists, taking advantage of the entire year and focusing on a more aware and attentive visitor. Owing to better organization, the tourist could make the most of their stay in the city, avoiding waiting, taking advantage of suggested itineraries and experiences that allow them to visit a wider area.

**The #enjoyrespectfirenze campaign that was recently relaunched by the Municipality in collaboration with Fondazione Destination Florence is not a solution to achieve conscious and sustainable tourism, but it is a significant message from the city to its visitors. What is the importance of the initiative?**

There is a crucial theme, which is the coexistence between residents and tourists. To improve it, it's essential to promote the responsible and respectful behavior of those

who visit the city, and the campaign tries to do exactly this. With clear and simple messages, we aim to make the experience of visiting Florence better and more sustainable, spreading awareness to protect the fragile beauty of our city and its delicate balance.

**Residents in the historic center are the citizens who suffer the most from the consequences of certain problematic forms of tourism. Through Fondazione Destination Florence, you launched a survey on the quality of life of residents. How will you use the results?**

This type of research allows us to investigate and fully understand the impact of tourism on the city in order to correct and implement sustainable tourism policies, both at an economic and social level. We await the results to fully understand the most serious consequences for residents of tourist presences and thus implement the necessary interventions to limit them.

**In May of this year, the Municipality and the Metropolitan City contributed to the establishment of Fondazione Destination Florence as founding members. How can the foundation be used as a strategic tool for the destination, in your opinion?**

The foundation can really be a decisive tool in bringing quality tourism to the city. Its formation has enabled us to enhance a wealth of important experiences and professionalism and ensure that together, public bodies and private stakeholders could work in an even more targeted way to renew policies for the promotion and reception of tourism, for the management of flows, and for the attraction and management of related industries. The synergy between public and private and the ability to develop long-term strategic planning will make the difference and allow Florence to make the leap in quality it deserves.

**How would you define true sustainable tourism?**

Tourism is an important sector, not only for our city but for the entire country. It's up to everyone, starting with politicians, to commit to ensuring that it does not change from a resource to a limitation. Sustainable tourism is slow, in contrast to hit-and-run tourism, which insists on the usual itineraries. It's attentive and responsible, therefore respectful of the city, and aimed at getting to know aspects of Florence that are lesser-known. I think of its increasingly contemporary vocation, still capable of intercepting new flows and interests. I think of the six paths that cross our city, and I think of the many events that we have been able to host, even of a sporting nature, such as the Tour de France.

Who's  
the  
pigeon  
here?



You deserve  
a unique and  
clean experience.  
Follow our tips  
to create it.

Florence  
is alive

treat it  
with care



find out how



Give  
yourself  
a divine  
reward



Choose  
local crafts and  
traditional foods  
for a heavenly  
experience

## Florence is alive: Enjoy Respect Firenze

**Fondazione Destination Florence** and the **Municipality of Florence** have launched the **#EnjoyRespectFirenze** campaign in response to the increased wave of tourism and the desire to deliver a message for respectful, aware and sustainable tourism.

**Leonardo da Vinci, Dante Alighieri, the Neptune of piazza della Signoria and the Electress Palatine** are a few of the well-known figures chosen for the campaign, with a message of **"Florence is alive: treat it with care"** viewable on the posters, buses, taxis and billboards around the city. Enjoy Respect Firenze is a concept that was developed in 2017 as part of the broader ministerial project, **Grandi Destinazioni Italiane per un Turismo Sostenibile**, which invited visitors to experience the city with a sense of responsibility and respect for its extraordinary but delicate heritage.

Focuses of the project are the use of **sustainable transport, the discovery of lesser-known Florence, the search for authentic local artisan products and respect for monuments, the environment and residents**. Fondazione Destination Florence works to identify and promote effective and long-term actions for the management of quality tourism, with this campaign operating as an aggregator of all the information available to tourists for respecting the city, which can be found at the website, **[www.enjoyrespectfirenze.it](http://www.enjoyrespectfirenze.it)**.

The planned involvement of **Autolinee Toscane, Alia and Publiacqua** widens the reach of the campaign, extending also to traders, taxi drivers, hoteliers, the Angeli del Bello Association and tourist operators in the area.

The graphics by the **Flod** agency are based on the simple yet effective concept that Florence is a living entity, with a delicate ecosystem whose balance must not be compromised. An ironic tone is taken to spark curiosity and foster appeal, with Dante Alighieri chosen to promote local crafts and foods, Leonardo da Vinci who advocates for intelligent ways of getting around the city, and Marzocco who calls for respect, especially when it comes to avoiding excessive noise at night and disposing of waste correctly. Neptune is the ambassador for respect for the environment, while the Electress Palatine bears the message that planning ahead ensures a better visit. Finally, there's the **pigeon**, who represents the behaviour to avoid when visiting the city, such as climbing on statues or entering fountains. The tourist is entrusted to be a **temporary custodian of the city** through the fresh visuals and language of the campaign that has a high visibility in the city.

Be  
smart



Plan your visit  
to make  
the most  
of your time  
in and around  
Florence

# Residents and tourists sentiment surveyed



**Fondazione Destination Florence**, in partnership with the **Data Appeal Company – Almawave Group and BVA Doxa**, is engaged in **analyzing the impact of tourist flows** in order to provide the Municipality with a **strategic plan for sustainable tourism development**. Obtaining reliable and real-time information on the different sectors of the destination's tourist offering, as well as visitors and competitors, in order to structure and implement a plan that would respect its social and cultural identity. With this objective, two types of analysis have been made available to the Municipality of Florence, to understand how much tourist flows in the city are affecting both residents and travellers.

Through **Big Data analysis**, Florence can examine the types of visitors coming to the city, the target markets and their level of satisfaction with the destination and the individual sectors of the tourism offering, comparing both strengths and weaknesses. With the support of Artificial Intelligence, it's possible to

predict the demand for the next 12 months, monitoring searches for flights and hotels.

The first results show some surprises. Despite the current mainstream narrative linked to overtourism, the overall perception of tourists is positive, and the destination seems to be able to absorb tourist pressure, even in areas most exposed to the phenomenon.

The level of **visitor satisfaction in terms of sentiment in respect to the UNESCO area has stood at 88.3 points out of 100** in the last six months, in line with the previous year and the pre-Covid figure of 88.5 in 2019. The destination sustainability indicator in the UNESCO area also appears positive (71.8 out of 100), which combines environmental indicators (the human and tourist impact on the destination's ecosystem), economic indicators (the assessment of visitor satisfaction based on the experience in individual tourism sectors), social indicators (the impact of

tourism on residents and on socio-cultural activities) and governance indicators (the pressure of tourists and the tourist offer on the destination and its management).

Preparations have begun for a **survey that will investigate the sentiment of Florentines**, developed with the BVA Doxa research institute. From September, a sample of residents will be involved in a pilot research project, to understand their real perception of the quality of life in the city and the impact of tourism in specific neighbourhoods, as well as their opinion on tourist policies. The data collection process is in three phases, the initial web listening phase (completed), the analysis of the digital traces of residents, and then

the direct engagement of citizens through surveys and in-person interviews. Other efforts to improve the housing landscape in Florence can be seen in the latest proposal by **Property Managers Italia**, the association chaired by Florentine Lorenzo Fagnoni. A five-point self-regulation code would set the rules, in the current absence of national regulation, in terms of damage insurance and multilingual signs. The concept is that managers would accept to take on greater condominium expenses with respect to the other residents in the building, given the greater use of the common spaces by tourists, with an obligation to soundproof apartments and equip them with adequate safety devices.

## **Enjoy Respect Firenze reaches Airbnb guests**

Since August 2024, **Fondazione Destination Florence** has an agreement with **Airbnb**, with every guest receiving information about the **Enjoy Respect Firenze** campaign in attempts to positively sway the type of tourism in the city.

# Events in and around Florence

*As the evenings begin to creep in closer, we keep our cultural calendars packed with unmissable exhibitions and international cinema fests, with a wide array of festivals keeping Florence ever-interesting.*

## EXHIBITIONS

### Impressionists in Normandy

Museo degli Innocenti hosts a major exhibition dedicated to impressionism on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the birth of the movement, with artists of the caliber of Monet, Bonnard, Corot and Courbet.

November 21-May 4 / [www.museodeglinnocenti.it](http://www.museodeglinnocenti.it)

### E fu sera e fu mattina

Palazzo Medici Riccardi hosts works by the renowned nature photographer, Valter Bernardeschi, with some of his most striking shots on display. His works, which have been published in magazines such as *National Geographic*, invite audiences to deepen their ecological awareness.

Until January 7 / [www.palazzomediciriccardi.it](http://www.palazzomediciriccardi.it)

### OltreCittà - Utopia and Reality from Le Corbusier to Gerhard Richter

20th and 21st century artists covering the subject of the city are at the centre of this display that features acclaimed names like Le Corbusier and Richter. The exhibition spans painting, sculpture, architecture, photography and music with a vast variety of styles.

September 26-January 19 / [www.villabardini.it](http://www.villabardini.it)

## FESTIVALS

### Fabbrica Europa

An international lineup of shows, concerts, performances, site-specific installations, talks, workshops, and theatre form the 31st edition of the multidisciplinary fest at PARC Performing Arts Research Centre and other venues. A collaboration with the Teatro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino Foundation for the inaugural weekend brings together some of the most acclaimed international artists and companies on the contemporary scene.

September 13-October 15 / [www.fabbricaeuropa.net](http://www.fabbricaeuropa.net)



Fabbrica Europa

### Autunno Fiorentino

A calendar of over 300 events ensures that there's something for everyone this season. The collection of shows, concerts, performances and workshops is ever-updated.

Throughout autumn / [www.cultura.comune.fi.it/eventi-autunno-fiorentino](http://www.cultura.comune.fi.it/eventi-autunno-fiorentino)

### Florence Queer Festival

Cinema la Compagnia is set to host the important Tuscan festival dedicated to Queer culture, organized by the IREOS association. Now in its 22nd edition, the festival features films, book presentations, exhibitions and talks on the LGBTQIA+ movement.

November 25-December 1 / [www.florencequeerfestival.it](http://www.florencequeerfestival.it)

### Eredità delle Donne

The female-focused fest has a 'Future' theme this edition, with high profile figures like journalist and writer Daria Bignardi, musician Paola Maugeri and economist Ginevra Bersani Franceschetti sharing their thoughts on topics facing women. Many events will be hosted at Manifattura Tabacchi, with online streaming giving access to those further afield.

November 22-24 / [www.ereditadelledonne.eu](http://www.ereditadelledonne.eu)

## MUSIC

### Maggio Musicale Fiorentino

Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* from October 24 to November 2, enraptures audiences with the story of a young geisha seduced and abandoned by an American naval officer, with Verdi's *La Traviata* coming to the prestigious stage from November 19 to December 1 and Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* from November 26-30.

October 24-November 2 / [www.maggiofiorentino.com](http://www.maggiofiorentino.com)

## CINEMA

### Middle East Now

Films, documentaries, exhibitions, talks, food and special events explore the contemporary culture of the Middle East, with screenings at both Cinema la Compagnia and Cinema Astra.

October 15-20 / [www.middleeastnow.it](http://www.middleeastnow.it)

### Lo Schermo dell'arte

The relationships between contemporary art, moving images and cinema are explored, leading to the discovery of new talents and expressive languages. Accompanied by the VISIO European Programme on Artists' Moving Images, curated by Leonardo Bigazzi, Cinema la Compagnia and other venues host the unmissable programme.

November 13-17 / [www.schermodearte.org](http://www.schermodearte.org)





Davide e Golia, Valter Bernardeschi

### **Festival dei Popoli**

A week-long international documentary film festival comes to different venues around Florence, begun in 1959 by a group of anthropologists, sociologists, ethnologists, media experts and humanities scholars to support and discuss social documentary cinema.

November 2-10 / [www.festivaldeipopoli.org](http://www.festivaldeipopoli.org)

### **TALKS**

#### **Videns Live**

Brief (formerly Studio Riprese Firenze) is organizing an exclusive in-person event at Space Cinema, dedicated to CMOs, CEOs and agencies, for a full immersion in the world of marketing and communication. 12 top-level speakers and 9 live panels discuss topics like content marketing, artificial intelligence, and social media.

November 8 / [www.ripresefirenze.it](http://www.ripresefirenze.it)

#### **BTO - Be Travel Onlife**

The 16th edition of the tourism-focused three-day affair returns to Stazione Leopolda, once more bringing expert national and international speakers together to discuss the main issues of the industry. With last year's edition attended by over 12,000 people, high numbers are expected with an ever-innovative lineup diving into hospitality, destination, food and wine and digital strategy and innovation.

November 27-28 / [www.bto.travel](http://www.bto.travel)

### **MICE**

#### **UIA Round Table Europe**

The significant networking event brought about thanks to Fondazione Destination Florence's work with Firenze Fiera and OIC Group sees keynote speeches by names such as President of UIA and First of vice-president of CoNGO, Cyril Ritchie, with round tables and case studies on topics like the future of events and the good, bad and ugly of artificial intelligence. The important event for the world of associations serves as a showcase for the destination of Florence to bring further events.

November 14-15 / [www.uia.org/roundtable/2024/eu](http://www.uia.org/roundtable/2024/eu)

#### **WIM - We Inspire Memories**

The sixth edition of the exclusive event dedicated to the wedding and events sector takes place in Florence, with wedding and private event professionals from Italy and abroad meeting to build relationships and to contribute to educating all industry players with respect to trends and market news.

November 20-22 / [www.wim.events](http://www.wim.events)



### **Helen Frankenthaler: Painting without Rules**

The latest show at Palazzo Strozzi always creates a stir, and that is certainly the case with Frankenthaler's poetic abstraction. Considered one of the most significant American artists of the 20th century, the exhibition explores her innovative soak-stain technique and demonstrates her relationship between colour and form and how she expanded the potential of abstract painting in a way that continues to inspire artists today.

September 27-January 26

[www.palazzostrozzi.it](http://www.palazzostrozzi.it)



### **FLORENCE AMBASSADOR AWARD**

An annual highlight in the industry is the awarding of the city's most impactful ambassadors in the spectacular location of Palazzo Vecchio's Salone dei Cinquecento. This year taking place on October 31, the event promoted by the Municipality of Florence in co-operation with Fondazione Destination Florence and Firenze Fiera, supported by Triumph Group International is a prestigious event in which leading figures in the academic and scientific fields are acknowledged.

October 31 / [fondazione.destinationflorence.it](http://fondazione.destinationflorence.it)



## Florence proves readiness for large-scale sports events

June 29 marked a historic occasion, the **Tour de France**, the world's most prestigious cycling race, started in Italy for the first time in its 111-year history. **The Grand Départ took place in Florence** before the racers climbed over the Tuscan-Emilian Apennines on their way to Rimini on the Adriatic coast in an opening stage dedicated to the memory of the great Italian cyclist, Gino Bartali. The new **sports commission of Fondazione Destination Florence** was launched to bring together public administrations, private entities and the sport's world with the intention of attracting national and international sporting events and competitions capable of enhancing the suburbs and deseasonalizing tourist flows.

The positive impact for both the city and metropolitan area of the Tour de France laid the foundations for the division that works to systematically bring top-tier events to the city and beyond. It aims to develop a diversified offering that's capable of responding to the sector's specific requirements, capable of meeting the needs of large numbers. The commission's timeliness is further evidenced by the fact that between **12 and 15 million foreigners visit Italy every year for reasons related to sport** (source: UNWTO),

with an estimated growth over the next few years to reach around 20% of the total tourism in the national territory. A higher spending capacity is reported for this sector, which reaches hospitality and catering businesses (52%), with 24% spent in recreational, cultural and entertainment activities (Centro Studi Turistici).

The success of the large-scale Grand Départ indicated the city's readiness to welcome sports tourism at this level. In addition to its ability to host cycling



events, marathons, and other road-races, Florence is also home to a variety of innovative sporting venues, such as **Palazzo Wanny, Stadio Artemio Franchi, Viola Park and the Canottieri**, which is not only a rowing club but also an extraordinary events' venue.

**Investment in major sporting events increases the potential of Florence.** The new sports division will mainly focus on attracting major sporting events, namely national and international events and competitions that guarantee strong vis-



1. Stadio Artemio Franchi
- 2-3. The Grand Départ
4. Palazzo Wannay
5. Viola Park

### The Grand Départ In numbers:

**5,000** journalists  
from **190** countries

**700,000**  
spectators along the  
Florence-Rimini route

**20** million euro  
positive impact on  
Tuscany's GDP,  
according to IRPET

**90%** occupancy in  
Florence's hotels and  
bed and breakfasts  
within 50km from  
Florence



ibility to Florence and the entire Metropolitan City, while attracting a high number of spectators in the stands, for example European Championships and World Championships. The ambition is to attract events that bring large participation, at both youth and senior level. The process will involve mapping the metropolitan territorial offering, which has been developed in recent months and is ever-improved.

**CONI Toscana** will also play a crucial role in the commission's activities, in-

volving the territorial committees of the main institutional bodies such as sports federations, associated disciplines and promotional bodies which are essential in order to create a strong and cohesive sports network.

On the occasion of the launch, then-president of **Fondazione Destination Florence**, **Jacopo Vicini**, commented: "We are adding a further element to instill important change within the Florentine tourist offering. We wanted to strengthen the tools at our disposal, which we have

already put in place in the past, through the creation of a dedicated division that brings together public administrations, private entities and the world of sport, to play a key role in the great game of sports tourism in the city. It is a form of sustainable and high-quality tourism, often taking place outside the most popular seasons and which, if adequately managed, can represent an opportunity for growth and development for the entire territory".

# Teatro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino's international appeal



Florence is a city known worldwide for its artistic and cultural heritage, with the Teatro del Maggio (piazza Vittorio Gui, 1) playing a key role in enriching the cultural offering for visitors to the city. **Superintendent of Fondazione del Teatro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, Carlo Fuortes**, arrived in the role five months ago at a time when the theatre is playing a leading role in attracting high-profile events to the city, having hosted **12 conventions and 4 conferences for a total of 22,000 participants in 2023**, also thanks to the collaboration with **Fondazione Destination Florence**. We speak to the Superintendent to elaborate on Teatro del Maggio's extensive programme and international appeal, as well as its capabilities in terms of convention and congress tourism.



**Teatro del Maggio has recently presented a broad and ambitious program that covers the whole of 2025 and includes the 87th edition of Festival del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, in contrast to the previous duration of programmes. What are the driving forces behind the theatre's new course, and why such a long-term programme?**

I believe it's essential to offer a wide-ranging programme that not only gives the possibility to promote the theatre's offering to the world, but also gives the time necessary to all international and local tour operators in order to include the events in tourist packages while giving individual tourists the possibility to purchase tickets directly online. I think it's a great way to launch the theatre in correspondence, of course, with the quality of the programme because it's not only about making the programme available well ahead of time, but also ensuring that it's of high quality, and I believe that's the case with what we have presented. There's already been a positive response, with 40% more memberships in autumn compared to spring.

**Maggio Musicale Fiorentino is one of the oldest opera festivals in Europe, and the theme for the 2025 programme is "The tradition of the new". How do these souls reconcile?**

The title comes from the fact that since the festival was created in 1933, it's a formula that has spread all over the world. The Maggio came about in a very fertile period culturally speaking, born at the same time as the Venice Biennale, for example. Both of which were precursors. The Maggio looks at the world of opera as a place of discovery and of languages within production, from set designers to painters to cinema, broadening the possibilities for writers, musicians and composers, and broadening the offering for tourists.

**With the growing focus on experiential tourism, what unique experiences could Teatro del Maggio offer tourists seeking deeper cultural immersion?**

The type of tourist who attends an event of this kind is interested in culture, for which Italy is a forerunner worldwide. The theatre is fundamental to capturing this type of audience. This theatre has a very unique standing, given its modernity and contemporaneity, having been created in 2011. It's certainly one of the most contemporary places in the city, which is in some way not in tune with Florence, because if you think of Florence,



[www.maggiofiorentino.com](http://www.maggiofiorentino.com)



you tend to think of beautiful historic architecture, museums, and the magnificent places in the center, perhaps not imagining this style of theatre. I think it's very important to value this place for congress events, for example, given the fundamental role that it can have in the city's congress tourism offering. I believe that Florence can be one of the first cities in the world for congress activities of the highest level, not mass congress tourism, which normally finds an immediate response in cities like Vienna, Milan, Hamburg, and London, but congress tourism in a beautiful city with a nice climate where you can eat well and this is why it could be such a global success. We have around 11 spaces, accommodating figures of up to 2,000 people, as well as the 300-plus seats of Teatro Goldoni on the other side of the river. From this point of view, we are also at the service of the city and tourism, and right from the start, I am looking for and giving the possibility for the theatre to be used for those means.

**How can the collaboration between the theatre and Fondazione Destination Florence make a difference for the destination?**

We have many connections with Fondazione Destination Florence and the agencies in the fields of events and congresses. Having the programme established so much in advance makes it easier to make the space available, as we know the exact days of the shows, and so we can plan well for these types of events, offering spaces for receptions, meetings, conventions, gala dinners, exhibitions, fashion shows, displays and more.

**Teatro del Maggio's many spaces**

Platea Foyer  
**1600 m<sup>2</sup>**

Cloakroom Corridor  
**286 m<sup>2</sup>**

Gallery Foyer  
**565 m<sup>2</sup>**

Zeffirelli Hall  
**80 m<sup>2</sup>**

Orchestra Hall  
**386 m<sup>2</sup>**

Sala del Ballo  
**370 m<sup>2</sup>**

Sala Grande Teatro  
**1480 m<sup>2</sup>**

Stage  
**600 m<sup>2</sup>**

Cavea  
**2000 m<sup>2</sup>**

**The 2025 programme in numbers**

**10**

operas  
(including 6 new productions)

**25**

symphonic and choral symphonic concerts

**2**

ballets

**1**

opera for children

**2**

non-subscription events

# Congress and corporate tourism on the rise in Florence

In 2023, almost 11,700 events took place in 190 venues analyzed, registering over 807,000 participants (+15.2%) and more than 1.9 million daily attendances (+22.4%). An estimated increase of 52.6% for 2024 indicates a **strong upward tick for event venues**, according to a study conducted by the **Italian Observatory of Congresses and Events (OICE)**, promoted by **Fondazione Destination Florence**.

The economic impact on Florence of the congresses acquired in 2023 alone is over 30 million euro, with fourteen high-profile international congresses set to take place between 2024 and 2028, reaching 18,000 expected participants.

Just over 80% of the conferences take place at **Firenze Fiera**, but **Teatro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino**, the city's opera house, is also gaining traction as a venue for corporate events. Last year, it hosted 12 conventions and four conferences, hosting 22,000 delegates. The impact on **hotel occupancy** was also significant, reaching 29% for an average presence of 1.35 days.

**President of Fondazione Destination Florence, Laura Masi**, commented, "Florence is the ideal destination for events of all kinds and sizes. In addition to the constant and effective collaboration with Firenze Fiera for large events, we are pleased to highlight

the development of the hotel sector as a venue for hosting smaller events and conferences. Development in terms of sustainable tourism for the entire metropolitan area is in the Foundation's DNA. Thanks to its unique characteristics, conference and corporate tourism fits perfectly into this vision. The data also certifies the effectiveness of our work: supporting and promoting ever-increasing quality tourism".

**President of Firenze Fiera, Lorenzo Becattini**, adds, "Thanks to the synergy with Fondazione Destination Florence, with the Municipality of Florence, and all the other institutions and bodies involved, the business volume of the congress sector is growing exponentially. In 2023, we hosted 133 events for a total of 60 thousand participants, up compared to the previous year. Also, last year we obtained the ISO 20121 certification, which is essential for hosting sustainable events. Finally, with the completion of the work on the new Bellavista pavilion (scheduled for early 2027), our spaces will be equipped with a new room that will be ideal for large corporate and congress events and for hosting corporate and medical-scientific events that bring quality tourism to the city and leave a legacy in the area"

## 2023 IN NUMBERS

**11,697**

events in 2023

**807,000**

participants (+15.2%)

More than

**1.9 million**

daily attendances (+22.4%)

**52.6%**

estimated increase for 2024

**30 million**

euro economic impact



With the 8th edition of the **Florence Ambassador Award** taking place on October 31, we take the opportunity to speak with the 2022 recipient of the award, Professor **Rino Rappuoli** (Fondazione Biotechnopolo Siena), one of the world's leading vaccine experts.



In 2022, you were awarded Ambassador by the city of Florence, together with microbiologist Mariagrazia Pizza, for having contributed to the awarding of IUMS 2024, the International Microbiological Societies Congress. How important is the hosting of this type of conference for Florence?

If you go to the [iums.org](http://iums.org) website, you'll find information on the IUMS Congress in October with the words: the Renaissance in Florence and in microbiology. That is to say, holding the meeting in Florence allows us to connect the history and the great cultural revolution that Florence has brought to the entire world and to use it as a starting point to understand how it is necessary, especially in science, to be continually reborn – to innovate and move into the future.

Just one year after your award, news arrived of another important award in which you and Dr. Pizza, together with Professor Chiara Azzari, played a significant role. In 2025, the city will host the International Pathogenic Neisseria Conferences, which will bring together the leading experts in infectious disease research. How much does the support of a destination for its academic-scientific community affect the acquisition of such prestigious conferences?

People from all over the world willingly come to Florence, so when you organize a meeting in this city, you always start with an extra gear. However, the city alone is not enough, you also need the presence of scientific excellence. In the case of the meeting on Neisseria, the presence of Chiara Azzari, a figure of high scientific prestige, was essential for this choice.

What impact can scientific events such as these have on a destination like Florence, not only in economic terms, but also scientific and cultural? How can we best capitalize on this?

The legacy that international meetings leave is scientific connections, the possibility for young people and local scientists to interact with the best in the world in their field. It's very important that there's an active participation of academics, students, Biotech companies and industry in the events that are held in Florence.

Do you think that initiatives such as the Florence Ambassador Award, of which you were a recipient, strengthen the image of Florence as a center of excellence for the international scientific community?

The Florence Ambassador Award allowed me to get to know Fondazione Destination Florence and the convention bureau, which was extremely useful in facilitating the organization of conferences.

Looking to the future, what could be done to further raise the quality of conferences and conventions held in Florence?

In addition to having a good organization, you need to acquire international level scientists who know how to bring the best in the world here, so you need an attractive and cutting-edge academic and industrial sector.

Finally, how important was the collaboration with the city's Convention Bureau in obtaining events of this importance?

The Convention Bureau was very important, both at the beginning when it introduced us to the Florence system of which we were not aware, and then in its support with all the questions that came in the two years of preparation for the meeting.



## International Microbiological Societies Congress

Palazzo dei Congressi  
/ Palazzo degli Affari.  
October 23-25, 2024

*Medical and non-medical microbiologists from different disciplines meet around the theme "Microorganisms for sustainable solutions: environmental & clinical implementations".*

[www.iums2024.com](http://www.iums2024.com)

## International Pathogenic Neisseria Conferences 2025

Palazzo dei Congressi.  
March 31-April 4, 2025

*Premier event for the scientific community working on the pathogenic Neisseria species, with the conference covering cutting-edge research, clinical updates, and offering networking opportunities.*

[www.ipnc2025.com](http://www.ipnc2025.com)

# Cordon Bleu Scuola di Arte Culinaria

Learn about Italian culinary cultures at one of Florence's most established cooking schools



Founded by friends Cristina Blasi and Gabriella Mari in 1985, **Cordon Bleu Scuola di Arte Culinaria** is a reputable cooking school that has been educating **passionate amateurs and professional chefs** for nearly four decades.

Located along quintessential Florentine street via Giusti in a 16th-century palazzo, complete with high frescoed ceilings and terracotta tiled floors, this cooking school par excellence is the perfect place to savour an eclectic range of quality courses run by qualified staff.

Tailored kitchen-based **teambuilding experiences** appeal to conference organizers and the MICE industry due to the spacious halls capable of hosting **large groups**, while the study abroad and destination wedding sectors can benefit from the culture-centric approach to afternoons spent learning about **regional Italian cuisines**. A recent addition, the **Bistecca alla Fiorentina** class, instructs about the types and cuts of meat as a butcher comes into the kitchen to show how the bistecca is cut before grilling the beef. An important part of the large group

experience is sitting down together for a full meal, digesting the lessons learned and enjoying the end results.

**Cordon Bleu Scuola di Arte Culinaria** is not only focused on **short educational experiences**. Students come from around the world to take part in the **month-long Italian cooking "Labs"**, held in the summer and winter, and professional chefs attend **specific courses for continued development**.

**Quality** is the watchword as Cristina and Gabriella only purchase the **very best ingredients**, such as organic extra-virgin olive oil from Fucecchio and tomatoes from a grower on the Tuscan coast.

Now approaching the school's 40th anniversary, cooking technologies and people's approaches to learning have changed, but Cristina and Gabriella's enthusiasm is the same as ever. "We might be a bit vintage, but everything we do is genuine and with an amore for cooking." Where could be better to learn about Italian cuisines than at Florence's very own **Cordon Bleu Scuola di Arte Culinaria**?



**Cordon Bleu Scuola di Arte Culinaria**

Via Giusti 7, Florence  
+39 055 2345468

[www.cordonbleu-it.com](http://www.cordonbleu-it.com)  
[info@cordonbleu-it.com](mailto:info@cordonbleu-it.com)



## New and upcoming arrivals on the city's accommodation scene.



### Collegio alla Querce, Auberge Resorts Collection

A 16th century university building in Florence is set to home the California-based wellness-focused hotel group's first hotel in Italy. The hilltop setting overlooking the city centre will vaunt an exquisite spa sure to draw those seeking an urban-resort experience. A large garden and pool are nestled in grounds, with the La Gamella restaurant focused on seasonal Italian classics and an original chapel and theatre adding to the intrigue.

[www.aubgeresorts.com](http://www.aubgeresorts.com)



### Ruby Bea

Taking its lead from the Renaissance, the new opening in piazza della Libertà is set in a porticoed building overlooking a grand, tree-lined square, taking its name from Dante Alighieri's love, Beatrice. Rich, dark hues meet bold, geometric shapes, with an expansive roof terrace and enticing library. Live gigs by local bands, buffet-style dining and ample events spaces add to the offering.

[www.ruby-hotels.com](http://www.ruby-hotels.com)



### The Hoxton

Another opening near piazza della Libertà is The Hoxton, on via delle Mantellate. Spring 2025 will see the opening of their Italian-riviera inspired restaurant and Enoteca Violetta wine bar, while the Lobby bar serves breakfast, an all-day menu and relaxed evening drinks. A range of Renaissance and postmodern-style hotel rooms are inspired by the venue's setting in the vibrant neighbourhood, with a palatial 161 rooms greeting guests.

[www.thehoxton.com](http://www.thehoxton.com)



### The Social Hub Florence Belfiore

A place to learn, stay, work and play, The Social Hub proves the popularity of its existing Lavagnini location by adding a second site in Florence. With eclectic events and an open-to-the-city vibe, the San Jacopino neighbourhood is soon to see this lively location create new connections, planned for early 2025.

[www.thesocialhub.com/florence-belfiore](http://www.thesocialhub.com/florence-belfiore)



## Ever more elaborate mini-weddings, elopements and proposals

When it comes to choosing a location for a destination wedding, the allure of Tuscany most certainly enchants. Rolling hills, secret grottos, and vineyards weave magic around all those who enter with dining experiences like nowhere else in the world. Tuscany is chosen time after time by those looking for the ultimate setting to celebrate their love. **What's newer to the wedding scene, however, is the increase in sophisticated wedding proposals and elopements, with mini-weddings on the rise.**



A report carried out by the **Tourism Studies Centre of Florence** and Convention Bureau Italia in 2022 confirmed that small weddings and “love escapades” account for over 34% of celebrations, with 18.8% opting for the wedding week formula, a party spread across multiple days that includes guided tours to discover the surrounding territory. Tuscany was chosen for **21% of over 11,000 foreign weddings** celebrated in Italy in 2022, the first region in the country for destination weddings. While summer is undoubtedly the season with most requests, **winter** is not to be cast aside, with the charm of festive Florence appealing to those seeking an atmospheric and glamorous scheme.

Carefully curated luxurious occasions have been proven to be a huge success with the international market, but a newer bracket demonstrates a tendency for equally elegant proposals and elopements. Elaborating on the increasing

number of couples seeking more intimate celebrations, is **Rita Tavella, founder and CEO of Your Wedding in Florence**. Having grown up between New York, Rome and Florence, Rita is well aware of what international couples seek for their big moments. With over 30 years' experience in the organization of large-scale events and congresses having founded **MCR Conference S.r.l**, Rita channeled this energy and wisdom into her long-held dream of organizing a wedding planning agency, which she did in 2017.

Precursors in the sector, Your Wedding in Florence creates tailor-made packages for **marriage proposals, anniversaries, elopements or any kind of romantic evening** for couples seeking something entirely enchanting. Experts at the astonishing, floral compositions and intimate atmospheres with sparkling candles are just the beginning of the unforgettable occasions curated by the



team, with huge attention paid to the personality of each individual. Couples can choose from an **Arno cruise, vineyard dinner, chic-nic, secret grotto, treasure hunt, tower dinner, a barn proposal and there's even a hot air balloon proposal** among the many options listed.

The rise in requests, Rita ponders, is perhaps in part attributable to the increased visibility granted by TV programmes by the likes of Stanley Tucci and the comedies

released on Netflix that make Americans in particular long for the dream of Italy. With so many stunning villas to choose from that can be used all year round, those who are sentimental are no doubt satisfied.

Rita's aptitude for the romance industry was kick-started by her fascination with her parent's fairy-tale proposal and wedding, with the images of their celebration in a small town in Calabria fueling her own passion for

weddings. The large number of requests for their expertise is mainly international, with **around 95% of their clients coming from abroad, such as America, Canada and Australia.** "Having come from the world of events, we were used to big numbers, so the quantity doesn't scare us. We're also a tour agency, and so we can cater to all aspects of their trip". When it comes to their expansion into proposals, Rita tells us, "I was inspired because my father was a big romantic. He traditionally courted my mum in the south. It's great to see that young people still have this way of thinking, and young Italians are now thinking about big proposals too. The most common request is for a dinner in a vineyard with a panoramic view, but we have many ideas, from adrenaline proposals like in a hot air balloon with a high-altitude photographer to a Rapunzel-like tower, we check out their Instagram to get an idea for their personality and that starts the creative process".

The intimacy of elopements and mini-weddings, with often only close friends and

family involved, offers a warm atmosphere and the possibility of enjoying quality time with each guest, enabling truly precious memories in spectacular settings. In terms of the larger celebrations, a destination wedding, as their website tells us, is much more than just a ceremony. It's the complete experience that takes in **welcome parties, concierge services, and the travel and tours** around the occasion, transforming every phase into something exceptional.

When groups arrive to celebrate weddings, they usually choose to spend a few days in the region, enjoying experiences like **wine tastings, cooking classes and visits to artisans' studios,** exploring traditions like leathermaking and terracotta. These experiences not only enrich the sense of occasion, they also enhance the best of the region, ensuring the soul of Tuscany is savoured and continued, "the real key to success", Rita concludes.

## New public gardens open along viale Michelangelo



A former campsite along viale Michelangelo has been converted into public gardens after having fallen into disuse for almost ten years. Situated to the right of piazzale Michelangelo and the Iris Garden, the new park covers **nearly ten acres of land and aims to attract locals to enjoy the greenery** as well as lovers of contemporary culture due to the street art section in partnership with **Street Levels Gallery**.

“We worked for a long time on the complete regeneration of this wonderful place, now transformed into a garden available to everyone within the UNESCO area of Florence,” said

**Dario Nardella**, in one of his final presentations as the Mayor of Florence. “It’s a last gift to the city and I’m happy to deliver it to those who will come after me.”

The redevelopment, which was carried out by the city’s environmental department and landscape architecture firm **Studio Bellesi Giuntoli**, costing 450,000 euro, focused on **improving accessibility and making the area safe**, including **new LED lighting**. Many existing pathways, both for vehicles and pedestrians, followed a logic linked to the functionality of the campsite and have been reclaimed as far as possible

by integrating them with the new routes in line with the existing landscape. A **new pedestrian path** starts in piazzale Michelangelo by the parking lot near the Iris Garden and reaches a newly built access gate by following the park’s boundaries. A **telescope** inserted into shrubbery provides exceptional views of Florence and Fiesole. In terms of the greenery, all 700 or so olive trees have been maintained and all other trees have undergone thorough checks. **Picnic areas and seats** have been added along the main paths as well as an area in which children can play football.



## Restoration begins on the tunnel beneath the Arno

Work has begun on draining water from the old tunnel between **Torre della Zecca and piazza Poggi** in order to return the pedestrian walkway to locals and tourists.

The **250-metre-long underground passageway** is made up of two parallel tunnels that are three metres wide and run at a depth of five metres beneath the Arno. 7.5 million euro has been set aside by the **Tuscan regional government** to restore one of the pedestrian subways by 2026. Originally used by soldiers to move between the sides of the river, the walkway was expanded in the 19th century, when Florence was the capital

of Italy, to include water tubes for the city aqueduct. Over the years, the tunnel has sprung leaks and a floating robot is set to gauge the damage to the waterproofing.

“We need to understand the state of repair of the tunnel from the inside,” explains **Eugenio Giani, president of the Tuscany Region**. “This knowledge will enable us to plan the restoration project using feasibility studies... We

would like to finish the work by 2026, but that will depend on the tunnel’s conditions. “Once accessible, the old tunnel beneath the Arno will allow Florentines to rediscover a hidden part of their city,” explains **Sara Funaro, Mayor of Florence**. “As well as allowing tourists to take a different route to the Oltrarno and change the tourist flow.”

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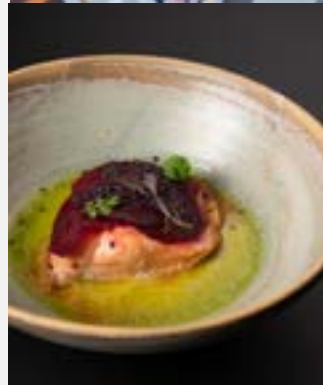
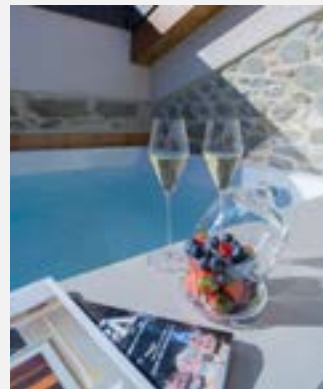
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## GenerAzione Casa: co-living to combat student housing shortage

Young non-residents of the city are matched with residents in a cohabitation project launched by the **Municipality of Florence** and **Fondazione Destination Florence**, with the support of **Auser Laboratorio Casa** and **Cooperativa Il Girasole**.



The project came about due to the need to combat the shortage of student housing while promoting mutual support between different generations. With high rental prices and limited availability of housing on the market, this serves as an opportunity for those in need of temporary accommodation, with students put in direct contact with homeowners (people who live alone, families or couples), who have an extra room and want to make it available.

The Municipality has provided a mapping of the potential accommodation among the 364,086 residents in the city, 34,000 of which are over 65 and live alone. With 24,000 homeowners, there is a significant pool of real estate units that could help respond to the ever-increasing demand for accommodation for out-of-town students at more affordable rates.

Participating students who are not residents in Florence would be asked to contribute to the expenses of the house through a regulated monthly rent quota, in a fair and transparent way. Autonomy of the co-habitants would be guaranteed, while also going beyond the simple sharing of spaces, fostering intergenerational relationships that would enrich the exchange between residents and students.

Through the **Belong** project, aimed at supporting young people who have chosen Florence for study or work, **Fondazione Destination Florence** plays an important role in coordinating the various

involved subjects and stakeholders and will be responsible for promoting the project. A fundamental role is played by Auser Laboratorio Casa and Cooperativa Il Girasole,

which will be responsible for selecting the candidates (guests and hosts) according to economic-income criteria, as well as compatibility assessments to ensure the best match possible. Responsibilities and domestic tasks will be evaluated, with periodic checks and assistance to protect the safety and wellbeing of guests and hosts.

An example already in action is that of a young psychology student of Polish origin, who could no longer avail of her university accommodation in Florence and could not afford a room to rent, and she now lives harmoniously with a woman resident in Florence.

The project also involves the **University of Florence** to spread the initiative among students and academic staff.



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