



DF

Destination Florence

CULTURE/ Fra Angelico is at the centre of a major exhibition across two venues

STUDENTS/ The Belong Advisory Board is launched to strengthen integration and dialogue

SPORT/ Sustainable tourism around the Estra Firenze Marathon

INTERVIEW/ Deputy Mayor Paola Galgani discusses the city's green objectives

FLORENCE UNFOLDS

DF
Destination
Florence

Issue 14

Autumn/Winter
2025

Free issue

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

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cover photo: Marco Badiani



Ph. Valeria Raniolo



Yeast is known to the public as the main player in the production of wine, beer, and bread. Many of us have smelled and tasted it since childhood, in fermenting must and bread. Few know that today it is the primary and most important cellular factory for the production of drugs, such as semaglutide and insulin; flavourings for the perfume and food industries; and vaccines. Even less well-known is that yeast was the cradle of fermentation chemistry, first with the studies of Christian Hansen and Louis Pasteur and then of genetics and genomics.

Every two years, in different locations around the world, a conference is held to present the most important discoveries on this microorganism: the ICYGMB, which stands for **International Conference on Yeast Genetics and Molecular Biology**. This is the most important and longest-running global meeting of the scientific community studying the microbiology, cell biology, and genetics of this eukaryotic organism, first held in Carbondale, Illinois, in 1961. Given the importance of the event, these conferences always feature renowned speakers, including some of the many Nobel Prize winners who have used this microorganism as a model.

ICYGMB has been held in Italy four times: Pisa in 1972, the 19th edition in 1999 in Rimini, the 27th in 2015 in Levico Terme (Trento), which saw the future Nobel Prize winner Yoshinori Oshumi preview his results, then in Florence from August 20-25, 2023. This conference does not represent an exclusively scientific forum but is a concrete tool for integrating research and the production world that allows the creation of innovative paths for young graduates in the world of work, which, in this sector, is absolutely booming and developing rapidly.

Since 2023, I have been president of **FINPOL**, and in June 2025, this society found a home and a formal structure in Florence, thanks in part to the **city's fundamental contribution, and Fondazione Destination Florence, with its brand new project, the Florence Association Centre**. We therefore established AISL, the **International Association for the Study of Yeasts**, to support the activities of conferences like the ICYGMB, but also as a tool to defend and disseminate the culture and innovation achieved through studies on this microorganism. Florence is the perfect home for this association, as much of its research is dedicated to wine yeasts, a key driver of the regional and national economy and historically a driving force of the Tuscan economy, so much so that over the centuries they have shaped its landscape—think of the terraced vineyards of the Chianti hills—and its economic success.

The conference, which launched the founding of this association, marked a crucial moment in the project we are pursuing to open an **International Microbiology Center** in Florence, together with our colleague Dr. Rino Rappuoli, President of the IUMS International Union of Microbiological Societies. This initiative goes well beyond yeasts and will help make Florence a meeting place for leading microbiologists from around the world, enabling the transfer of the most advanced research in the wine, agri-food, and vaccine sectors to Tuscan production, and contributing to the creation of a high-profile economic sector with excellent employment prospects.

Duccio Cavalieri, PhD.

Professor at the Department of Biology, University of Florence

Regenerating via Palazzuolo

Plans have been announced to regenerate the via Palazzuolo and via Maso Finiguerra area by 2026 through reviving its historic artisan vocation, with added greenery and pedestrian space.



Florence's **mayor Sara Funaro** recently signed a memorandum of understanding with **Fondazione CR Firenze** and the **Municipality of Florence** to launch **Recreos**, a project aimed at supporting the city's economy by reviving local craftsmanship and prioritizing pedestrian spaces in the via Palazzuolo area, without eclipsing the city's historic architecture and identity. The intent is to create a more social and sustainable Florence, with its people and artisans at the heart.

"The Recreos project stems from an ambition to regenerate and restore urban dignity to an area currently affected by complex issues," remarks **Bernabò Bocca**, president of Fondazione CR Firenze. "The goal is twofold: to address security, liveability and depopulation issues, on

the one hand, and to encourage the **return of the local artisan and economic fabric**, on the other. Recreos offers a city model—one that can be replicated elsewhere—that promotes quality of daily life, slow mobility and the rediscovery of public spaces as places to meet, work and care for each other."

"We know that the area around via Palazzuolo needs multiple responses in terms of safety, commerce, and residential life," commented Mayor Sara Funaro. "We've been working for some time on various actions in the area, starting with the redevelopment of the Santa Maria Novella complex. That's why we enthusiastically welcomed Fondazione CR Firenze's proposal to collaborate on this project. It's a model we aim to replicate in other parts of the city, starting

from one of Florence's core strengths—its artisan workshops."

The plans focus on the section between via Maso Finiguerra and via del Porcellana, where a **low-traffic area** will be created to enhance pedestrian access to workshops, studios, and small artisan businesses. The section between via del Moro and via del Porcellana, and between via dell'Albero and via Rucellai, will be redesigned with **wide sidewalks and street furniture**. Special attention will be given to the quality of details: the introduction of **greenery**—through trees and vertical gardens on building façades—will provide shade, comfort and promote **urban biodiversity**. The use of **natural materials**, combined with **soft lighting**, is intended to ensure safety and accentuate the aesthetic, highlighting the beauty of the existing architecture. Further plans include turning via Maso Finiguerra into a **square for socializing and gathering**.

The scheme seeks to **allocate 43 currently vacant spaces to artisans**, with selected proposals given access to renovated spaces for three years, free of charge. There have already been 222 expressions of interest, and 80 artisans have participated in preliminary interviews. The majority of these creatives come from the visual arts (painting, drawing, sculpture, graphic design, etc.), with additional applications for tailoring, violin making, and leatherwork businesses.

Luca Dini Design & Architecture, with a background in luxury yacht design, has been hired to carry out the design for this urban renewal. London's Notting Hill, Paris' Le Marais, Miami's Design District, and Dumbo in New York are cited as inspiration, as well as Florence's own via Gioberti.



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Bringing forward the Belong project: newly created advisory board

Created to strengthen dialogue and integration between Florentines and international students, the **Belong project** (www.belong.destinationflorence.com) promotes a sense of belonging and mutual understanding while positioning **Florence as an international hub for cultural and educational collaboration.**

The newly created **Belong Advisory Board** is composed of eleven prominent figures from academic, cultural, and institutional sectors, particularly from Italy-based American universities. Their role is to offer strategic guidance and to contribute to the development of the project while serving as ambassadors to foster partnerships and promote the programme globally. The board supports the creation of initiatives that integrate international students into Florentine life while providing independent and qualified perspectives on the evolution of the programme.

Appointed by **Fondazione Destination Florence in partnership with the Municipality of Florence**, members serve voluntarily for a renewable three-year term. The Belong advisory board acts with a vision that extends beyond its members, shaping opportunities that resonate across the board and other entities. Meeting twice a year, either in person or online, members share best practices and help identify impactful initiatives. Maintaining a voluntary and collaborative spirit, Fondazione Destination Florence will also be involved in assigning specific projects, while their key role is consultative in ensuring the Belong project aligns with the evolving needs of both the local and international communities in Florence.

The eleven members are **Dario Danti**, **Giorgia Giovannetti**, **Jason Houston**, **Stefano Baldassarri**, **Lorenzo Ricci**, **Alessandro Borrani**, **Lorenzo Tellini**, **Sasha Perugini**, **Rosa Maria Di Giorgi**, and **Marco Del Panta Ridolfi**—who, with their contributions, will help strengthen the bond between the city and those who choose it as a place of study and personal growth.

Dario Danti

City Councilor for Employment, Universities and Research

“The Belong Project Advisory Board aims to be a forum for dialogue and discussion among key players in Florence’s academic and institutional worlds. It will guide the decisions of a project that aims to foster the integration of international students, provide concrete responses to their needs, and find the most appropriate ways for them to integrate into the city. The City Council’s presence on the board is of great value; it demonstrates how much we, as an institution, care about Florence’s vocation as a city of education that is attractive to both Italian and international students. We intend to consolidate this dialogue by expanding the board to include the entire world of higher education in the city and gradually exploring individual issues, from housing to job opportunities, to develop project proposals that we, as an administration, can then implement.”

Lorenzo Tellini

School Director at Istituto Marangoni Firenze School of Fashion and Art

“Being part of the Fondazione Destination Florence Advisory Board represents a unique opportunity for Istituto Marangoni to contribute to the development of our region, sharing expertise and strategic visions to promote Florence as a destination of excellence. I’m certain that through collaboration and shared energy we can help make Florence even more appealing and a leading player on the international study abroad scene.”

Marco Del Panta Ridolfi

Former Secretary General of the European University Institute

“The Belong project is an opportunity to realize what was my goal during my years as a City Councilor in Florence: to build the City of Knowledge, based on attracting students and researchers – producers of knowledge – rather than just “hit-and-run” tourists. Being a member of the project’s advisory board allows me to continue in this direction, just as I endeavoured during my years as Secretary General at the European University Institute.”

Lorenzo Ricci

Associate Director, New York University Florence

“I’m honored to serve on the Advisory Board of the Fondazione Destination Florence. I hope that my extensive experience in both business and education will contribute to the foundation’s mission of making Florence the best possible destination for study abroad.”

Sasha Perugini

Director of Syracuse University Florence

“I’m honored to join the Fondazione Destination Florence Advisory Board, which serves as a learning laboratory and an opportunity to roll up your sleeves and contribute to the development of a city that never ceases to surprise those who think they know it. I would like this board to become a platform capable of highlight-



Dario Danti



Lorenzo Tellini



Marco Del Panta Ridolfi



Lorenzo Ricci



Sasha Perugini



Stefano U. Baldassarri

ing the many valuable testimonies that arise from the encounter between the city and the experiences of international students, restoring their dignity to the narrative and debunking caricatured stereotypes. I'm grateful for this opportunity and curious to see how our collaboration can blend tradition and future with a small but decisive step—a collaboration that's even more important in this time of technological revolution dominated by artificial intelligence."

Stefano U. Baldassarri

Director, ISI Florence

"I'm deeply honored by the invitation to join Fondazione Destination Florence's Advisory Board; it represents an excellent opportunity for me to learn and contribute to projects that I believe are beneficial to the entire city. I know almost all the other members of the committee, having collaborated with them in various ways over the course of nearly thirty years, since I returned to Florence after earning my PhD at Yale University. I therefore know that we share ideals and goals. Most

of us direct cultural institutes; in several cases, like mine, they are affiliated with AACUPI (Association of American College and University Programs in Italy). Together, since the late 1990s, we have held lectures, organized international conferences (ISI Florence, the "study abroad" program I direct, is a consortium of Australian, Japanese, and American universities), presented books, coordinated seminars, and established new courses to expand the educational offering and provide stable employment for faculty who live in this city. As the word itself suggests, an "Institute" must have a solid structure that can provide the necessary guarantees to everyone who works there and help them grow both personally and professionally. To this end, it is necessary to have a long-term vision—not only academic but also civic and social—and of the values to be promoted within the community. I believe that Fondazione Destination Florence, thanks also to the diverse skills it brings, can play a decisive role in ensuring that Florence is more than ever a centre of research, encounter, and development."

Fabrizio Ricciardelli

President AACUPI, Director Kent State University Florence

"I'm thrilled to announce the launch of the Belong Advisory Board, as I see this initiative as a concrete sign of Florence's international vocation. Being part of a project that brings together American universities, the University of Florence, and higher education institutions means being able to help build a genuine bridge between the local community and the international students who choose the city as a place to live and study. I believe the study abroad scene is a valuable opportunity to integrate diverse experiences, cultures, and perspectives, enriching the city's social and cultural fabric. It's an important step in strengthening the network of welcome and knowledge, and I'm proud to be a part of this journey."

Alessandro Borrani

President of Comitato Toscano

"Being appointed to the Advisory Board of Fondazione Destination Florence is



Alessandro Borrani



Giorgia Giovannetti



Rosa Maria Di Giorgi



Fabrizio Ricciardelli



Jason Houston

a source of pride and a recognition of the Comitato Toscano's work in promoting language, culture, and Made in Italy."

Rosa Maria Di Giorgi

President of the Cherubini Conservatory of Music, Florence and ISIA Florence

"Being part of the Belong project's Advisory Board strengthens an already established strategy aimed at bettering global dialogue with prestigious higher education institutions and fostering the academic community's integration into Florence's cultural and institutional life."

Jason Houston

Dean of Gonzaga University in Florence

"Serving on Fondazione Destination Florence's Advisory Board means expressing and conveying my passion and respect for Florentine culture to a new generation of students and visitors to the city."

Giorgia Giovannetti

Vice President for International Relations and Professor at the University of Florence

"Being part of Fondazione Destination Florence's Advisory Board together with Unifi means turning excellent ideas into concrete projects, seeing them realized, and overcoming inevitable obstacles together, with the aim of conveying the richness and vitality of Florentine culture to new generations of students and visitors."

GOALS

- To foster integration
- Listen to needs
- Build lasting relationships
- Enhance the presence of international students who enrich our social fabric with their stories, cultures, and visions.

Heat cameras to be installed for tourist flow monitoring in Florence

Plans have been announced to install thermal cameras in the streets of central Florence to monitor tourist flows. This is part of the memorandum of understanding between the city administration, the Department of Information Engineering at the University of Florence and the city's Foundation for Research and Innovation. The agreement calls for the implementation of a pilot project to test innovative digital solutions for the tourism sector through effective monitoring and management of visitor flows. The agreement is part of the activities of the project "TOURISMO – TOURism Innovative and Sustainable Management of flows," funded by the Interreg Euro-Med program, co-funded by the European Union and the Department for Cohesion Policies and the South of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers (DPCOES), officially launched in 2024. "Florence is becoming an increasingly smart city. Thanks to research and experimentation, we can now gather valuable data to develop digital solutions for sustainable tourism," says economic development and tourism councillor Jacopo Vicini. "From the Department of Information Engineering and the Foundation for Research and Innovation at the University of Florence, we are receiving a unique contribution in terms of innovation. We're starting with a pilot test in selected areas of the UNESCO centre, with the future goal of expanding this project, which has truly significant potential."



Deputy Mayor of Florence, Paola Galgani, discusses the city's green vision and the centrality of sustainability.

Florence is known worldwide for its artistic and cultural heritage, but it's also a city that invests significantly in urban greenery. What is the city council's vision on the role of greenery in the daily lives of citizens and in welcoming visitors?

We live in the midst of a climate crisis, the effects of which are having a particularly severe impact on cities. Therefore, greenery can no longer be seen as mere street furniture but as a true urban infrastructure that can help us mitigate and counteract what we are experiencing. Investing in greenery means putting people's well-being at the centre, especially in terms of both physical and psychological health, but it also means caring for our artistic and cultural heritage. The effects of the climate crisis are affecting monuments and works of art as well, making it difficult to enjoy our heritage, particularly at certain times of the year, such as the summer. Our city already has a lot to say on this: let's start with a tree cover of 30.5% of the city's total surface area, a comforting figure and in line with the minimum objectives identified internationally to respond to the negative effects of climate change, and an average area dedicated to public green spaces under the municipality's responsibility of 24 square metres per inhabitant.

In recent years, the topic of sustainability has become central. How is Florence working to combine the protection of its historical and artistic heritage with the enhancement of green spaces?

Greenery is an integral part of our city's artistic and cultural heritage. The images that visitors preserve and take home are certainly those of our monuments, but tree-lined avenues,



green hills, historic and contemporary gardens also have ample space. For those who govern the city, caring for the approximately 80,000 trees owned by the Municipality, in addition to those owned by public and private entities, has always been a priority, but today it has become the challenge of our time. The climate crisis is making cities inhospitable, with extraordinarily intense and unpredictable weather events, extreme summer heat and winter drought, to name a few. The mitigation and adaptation actions we are implementing aim to put the well-being of the people who live in Florence at the centre and do our part in the global challenge we are experiencing, knowing that in this way we also preserve the possibility of enjoying our

artistic and cultural heritage, which belongs to all humanity.

The Cascine Park is considered the green lung of Florence and one of the most important historic parks in Italy. What are the most significant projects underway or planned to make it increasingly accessible, safe, and attractive for both Florentines and tourists?

Through the Fondazione Cascine Bene Comune, which is part of the electoral programme we're currently working on, we want to put the park back at the centre of city life. Despite some critical issues we're well aware of, the Cascine Park is already a vibrant place: markets, festivals, concerts,

and sports. It's a historic park with a very contemporary feel that is much loved by Florentines. Yet, its many initiatives are often fragmented and little-known. The challenge will be to enhance the activities that bring the park to life and relaunch new ones, starting with an understanding of its ecological value and its role as a hub for intergenerational gatherings.

The new Green Plan represents a strategic document for the city's future. What are its main guidelines and objectives?

We drew inspiration from a concept that's now well-established: 3-30-300. **Three trees visible from every window, 30% tree cover, and 300 meters from a usable green area.** So, we created an environmental map of the city, viewing greenery as a true urban infrastructure with which to reinterpret the development of Florence. The plan is closely linked to the Municipal Operational Plan, or the city's urban development, where, for example, we have inserted the requirement for new parking lots to have at least 70% shade provided by greenery. The plan looks to the city's development over the next twenty years, but for these five years of our mandate, we have set ourselves the goal of increasing tree cover to 50,000 more trees and shrubs, starting with those areas of the city where it's more needed; de-paving green areas as much as possible; returning nature to the historic centre and creating new outdoor playgrounds and sports areas.

From a tourism perspective, how much does the availability of green spaces and urban parks impact Florence's attractiveness as an international destination?

I think it certainly has an impact. **Overcoming hit-and-run tourism also means giving visitors the opportunity to discover magnificent, yet lesser-known, places in the city.** Urban parks are places where you can rest in the shade of the trees, fill your water bottle at a *fontanello* (water fountain, as they're called in Florence), or stretch out for a picnic in the greenery. All these things are much appreciated by those who spend time in the city. Then there are, of course, parks and gardens with great historical and cultural value, such as Boboli and Villa Bardini, but also the Giardino delle Rose, which is a



favourite with tourists. Let's not forget the Arno River and the many nature trails running along it, from which you can admire the city from a new and unique perspective.

How can Florence present itself not only as a city of art but also as a green and sustainable city, in line with the new needs of travellers?

Certainly, by making the city more welcoming for those who live here, for those who work or study here, and for those who come to visit here too. The challenge is also to increasingly demand a respectful attitude towards Florence from those who visit the city, not to imagine the city as something to be gobbled up but as an asset to be cared for, even if only for a few days. Our city is a fragile and delicate ecosystem, not only from an environmental but also a human and social perspective. We must increasingly think about initiatives for tourists that go along this path: **not just visiting Florence, but staying in Florence and taking care of it.** I'm thinking, for example, of volunteer activities, but also of paying attention

to avoiding waste and separating it properly.

Looking to the future, what's your vision for Florence in ten years in terms of greenery, livability, and sustainability?

I imagine a city that has changed significantly, especially from an environmental perspective, thanks to the choices we're making today, for example, regarding the tram system. A city where the centre and suburbs are closely connected, where air quality has improved significantly, and where space for cars has been reduced, making room for places designed for people. Above all, I imagine a city where all this has been achieved without leaving anyone behind, combating inequality.

If you had to describe Florence in three words to an international visitor who hasn't yet visited, what would you choose?

Green, Lively, Livable.



Heavenly visions: Beato Angelico and the soul of San Marco

Beato Angelico will run from September 26, 2025, to January 25, 2026, across two major venues: Palazzo Strozzi and the Museum of San Marco.

Co-organized with the Ministry of Culture's regional museum directorate, this is the **first major Florence exhibition dedicated to Angelico in 70 years.** The Dominican friar's artistic genius found its most enduring expression within the walls of San Marco itself.

Born around 1395 in Rupecanina near Vicchio in the Mugello, **Guido di Pietro**, later known as Fra Angelico, entered the Dominican Order in nearby Fiesole sometime between 1418 and 1421. He took his vows at the **Convent of San Domenico**, where he began painting large altarpieces that would launch his career. But it was in **Florence**, and more specifically at **San Marco**, where Angelico's vision would come to full fruition.

The **Museum of San Marco**—once the Dominican convent where Angelico lived and worked—holds the most comprehensive collection of his frescoes. Commissioned by **Cosimo de' Medici** as part of a major renovation project, the convent was transformed into a theological and artistic beacon. Angelico was entrusted with decorating its interiors starting around 1440.

His frescoes at San Marco are not only his most personal works, but also some of the most powerful religious images of the early Renaissance. The **North Corridor Annunciation**, painted just outside the monks' cells, is perhaps his most iconic rendering of the biblical scene. Unlike earlier depictions, this Annunciation conveys a sacred stillness—Mary sits in quiet acceptance, Gabriel approaches with reverence, and divine light infuses the cloistered space.

Equally moving is the *Deposition from the Cross*, painted between 1431 and 1433. Temporarily relocated to **Palazzo Strozzi** for the show, this emotionally charged work depicts the descent from the cross with serene grace, balancing human emotion and divine order. Recently restored thanks to **Friends of Florence**, this work has returned to its original brilliance, offering viewers a renewed glimpse into Angelico's deep spirituality.

In addition to the frescoes, San Marco preserves Angelico's smaller panel paintings, including the **Madonna of the Shadows**, a meditative image tucked into a side corridor, and the **Silver Chest Panels**, once used to adorn a sacred reliquary.

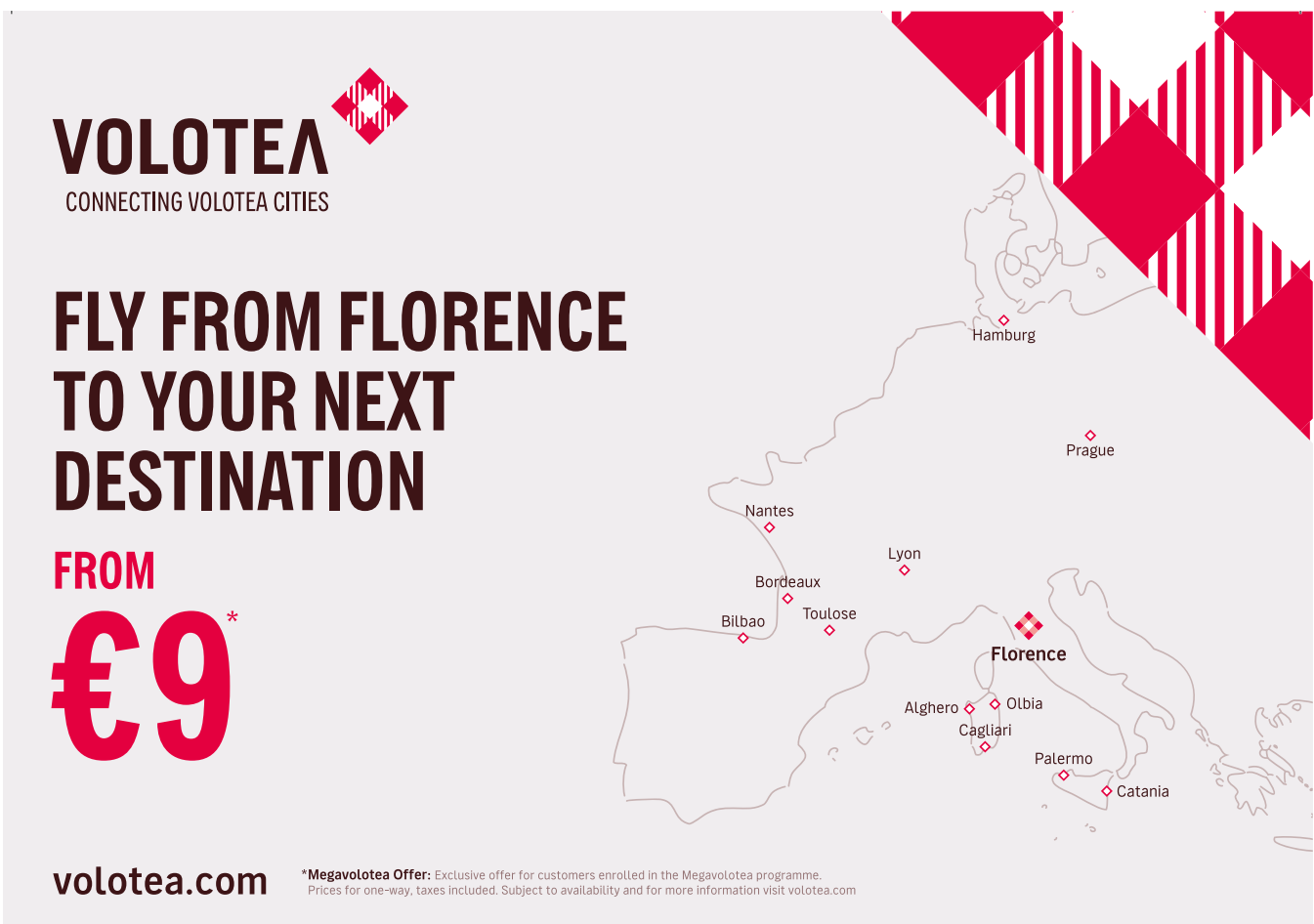
Curated by **Carl Brandon Strehlke**, curator emeritus of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the exhibition explores Angelico's artistic evolution and influence, presenting works in dialogue with contemporaries like **Lorenzo Monaco**, **Masaccio**, and **Filippo Lippi**, as well as sculptors such as **Lorenzo Ghiberti**, **Michelozzo**, and **Luca della Robbia**.



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Events in and around Florence

Fall brings plenty of film festivals and new exhibitions, with a wide array of cultural events keeping Florence endlessly interesting.



EXHIBITIONS

Toulouse Lautrec: A Journey Through Belle Époque Paris

The Innocenti Museum brings visitors into late 19th century Paris, with over 170 works by the renowned French artist exhibited alongside period furnishings, artifacts and materials, as well as works by his contemporaries that bring fin-de-siècle Montmartre to life.

September 27-February 22 / www.museodeglinnocenti.it

The Rose that Grew from Concrete

13 Italian and international artists engage with the former monastery space through site-specific works that explore resilience and the possibility of rebirth, even among ruins. Museo Sant'Orsola displays the works as its last temporary exhibition ahead of the official opening of the museum.

September 5-January 4 / www.museosantorsola.it

FESTIVALS

Autunno Fiorentino

With more than 300 events on the calendar, there's something for everyone this season. The lineup of shows, concerts, performances, and workshops is ever-updated, with events held in many venues across the city and surroundings.

Throughout autumn / www.cultura.comune.fi.it/eventi-autunno-fiorentino

Florence Biennale

The 15th edition of the international exhibition comes to Fortezza da Basso under the theme 'The Sublime Essence of Light and Darkness: Concepts of Dualism and Unity in Contemporary Art and Design.' Special guests include Tim Burton, who is set to receive the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award, and presents a new solo exhibition on the occasion.

October 18-26 / www.florencebiennale.org

L'Eredità delle Donne

The women-centered festival highlights prominent figures discussing issues affecting women today. This year's theme, IF-Intelligenze Femminili, explores the growing influence of artificial intelligence in all aspects of our lives.

November 21-23 / www.ereditadelledonne.eu

CINEMA

50 Days of Cinema

These autumnal evenings are best spent cozied up in front of a cinema screen, and there's certainly no shortage of film festivals this month: Middle East Now (Oct 7-12), FánHuā Chinese Film Festival (Oct 15-19), Festival di Cinema e Donne (Oct 22-26), France Odeon (Oct 29-Nov 2), Festival dei Popoli (Nov 3-9), Lo Schermo dell'arte (Nov 12-16), Florence Queer Film Festival (Nov 26-30), River to River Florence Indian Film Festival (Dec 5-10), and NICE Irish Film Festa (Dec 11).

Various dates / www.50giornidicinema.it

MICE

Èno Florence Wine Excellence

Two days to discover, taste and connect with those who work with wine come to Fortezza da Basso, with over 900 labels to taste and producers from all over Italy and the world. Don't miss the exclusive masterclasses and previews of new trends.

September 21-22 / www.enoflorence.it

EVER (European Association for Vision and Eye Research) Congress

The 28th edition takes place in Palazzo degli Affari, with experts in ophthalmology and the visual sciences meeting to reinforce fruitful collaborations between European researchers, clinicians and the industry.

October 9-11 / www.evercongress.org



Ph. Claudio Ripalti



BuyFood Toscana

Palazzo degli Affari hosts the B2B event that brings together Tuscan sellers and international buyers. Promoted by the Tuscany Region and the Florence Chamber of Commerce, the event is organized by the Fondazione Sistema Toscana and PromoFirenze.

October 22-23 / www.buyfoodtoscana.it

WAMM (World Airway Management Meeting)

A varied programme of lectures, workshops and social events creates a truly world-class gathering in Fortezza da Basso for the third meeting between those in airway management.

November 5-8 / www.wamm2025.com

I Pinguini Pediatrics Congress

Palazzo dei Congressi, housed in the 19th-century Villa Vittoria, is the setting for the unmissable event for pediatricians across Italy seeking quality, innovation and accuracy of professional content.

November 14-15 / www.pinguini.net

56th Italian Orthodontics Society Congress

The Italian Society of Orthodontics meets at Fortezza da Basso to continue its mission of providing education and support for those in the sector.

November 20-22 / www.sido.it

Castanea Expo 2025

The first national fair on the future of Italian chestnut growing comes to Fortezza da Basso, with supply, demand and innovation at the heart of the talks and events.

December 12-14 / www.castaneaexpo.it



FLORENCE AMBASSADOR AWARD

A key event in the industry each year is the recognition of the city's most influential ambassadors, held in the stunning setting of **Palazzo Vecchio's Salone dei Cinquecento**. This year's ceremony will take place on October 30 and is organized by the Municipality of Florence in collaboration with **Fondazione Destination Florence** and **Firenze Fiera**, with support from **JD Events**. The event honors prominent individuals from the academic and scientific communities, highlighting their significant contributions.

October 30

www.fondazione.destinationflorence.it



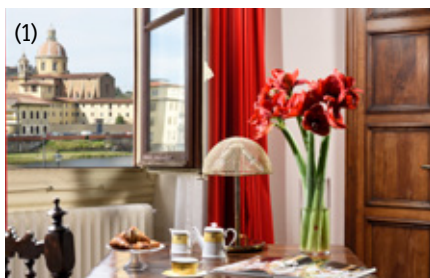
Roman busts now lining the Vasari Corridor

The Vasari Corridor, one of Florence's most iconic spaces, has entered the next phase of its modern revival with a new installation: over 50 ancient Roman busts lining the passageway's section over the Ponte Vecchio. This new display, unveiled this July by the Uffizi Galleries, marks a significant step in the museum's ongoing project titled *Futuro nell'Antico* ("Future in the Ancient"), which seeks to reintegrate the Medici's vast archaeological collections into the Uffizi museum spaces.

Discover four exceptional ways to stay in Florence with UNA Italian Hospitality

www.unaitalianhospitality.com

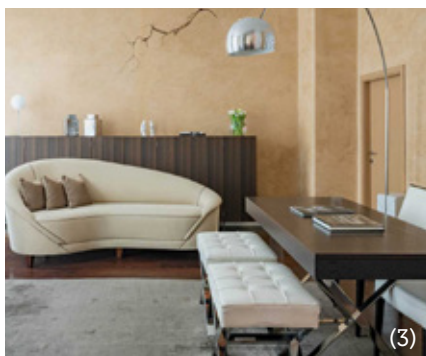
Florence, the cradle of the Italian Renaissance, is home to four properties from the **UNA Italian Hospitality collection**, located in the city's most strategic neighbourhoods. Four distinct properties, each with their own unique personality, are designed to meet the needs of a wide range of guests, from couples on a romantic getaway to families seeking comfort in one of Italy's most captivating destinations. They're equally well-suited to individual travellers, perhaps accompanied by their four-legged friends, and professionals travelling for business trips in need of a sophisticated base.



(1)



(2)



(3)



(4)

LEONE BLU SUITES (1)

UNA Esperienze

This exclusive gem is located in the heart of Florence in a 15th-century palace overlooking the Arno River. Leone Blu Suites at Palazzo Ricasoli combines the charm of history with the elegance of contemporary design, expressed through a refined collection of nine luxurious suites enriched with frescoes and designer furnishings that recount the history of the city by combining centuries-old elements with more modern touches. Timeless Italian art is blended with the works of the finest Florentine artisans, with bronze workers, blacksmiths and stonecutters having lent their expertise to every detail. This is nowhere more felt than in the enchanting Salone degli Specchi, where guests can enjoy breakfast surrounded by the unparalleled magic of a historic building. Leone Blu Suites | UNA Esperienze is ideal for those seeking an authentic and unforgettable experience in Florence.

REPUBBLICA FIRENZE

LUXURY APARTMENTS (2)

UNA Esperienze

Tucked away in one of the most historic parts of the city are four charming open-plan apartments located in a late-19th-century building. Palazzo Levi, which houses Repubblica Firenze Luxury Apartments | UNA Esperienze, boasts an elegant façade embellished with Tuscan-style columns, a testament to the city's noble traditions and neo-16th-century style. The four penthouses, strategically located in the city's historic heart, retain the architectural references typical of the Tuscan capital while embracing contemporary influences through sophisticated design and furnishings. Perfect for one or two guests, they feature a comfortable bedroom, a fully equipped kitchenette, a private terrace from which to admire the starry sky with a private telescope, and a white marble bathroom. At the heart of the apartments is a relaxing wellness

area with a glass-walled shower, chromotherapy, heated marble floors, and a rain shower. The true showstopper is the magnificent view from the apartments, which spans Brunelleschi's famous Dome, Giotto's Bell Tower, Arnolfo's Tower, and the Florentine rooftops.

RICASOLI FIRENZE

LUXURY APARTMENTS (3)

UNA Esperienze

Seven luxurious apartments, consisting of three three-room apartments and one four-room apartment, are housed within a majestic and historic building that stands a short distance from the Accademia Gallery. The building, with its simple façade typical of early 17th-century Florence, is a true blend of charm and comfort, thanks to its welcoming spaces where you can feel at home. The furnishings of the seven apartments each have unique colour palettes, materials, and furnishings, and were designed and crafted by local artisans. The chosen finishes are of the highest quality: teak floors alternate with lacquered wood and wenge for the paneling along the walls. The living area is further enhanced by a wellness area in each apartment, complete with a whirlpool tub and chromotherapy, for an experience of pure well-being and a sense of Florentine splendour.

UNA HOTELS (4)

Vittoria Firenze

A cutting-edge design distinguishes this eclectic structure with soul. Designed by the renowned architect Fabio Novembre, the hotel stands out for its visually striking interiors, colourful walls and furnishings with flair. Located in the trendy San Frediano area, there's an abundance of bars and cafés in the neighbourhood, with the area catering to the needs of a wide range of guests: from families, couples, and groups seeking spacious and welcoming spaces to business travellers seeking somewhere peaceful. It's an easy twenty-minute stroll to reach the historic centre, passing through mesmerizing centuries-old streets as you wander. A wide range of services awaits you once you return to base: 84 rooms of various sizes and types, two meeting rooms, an on-site bar and restaurant, as well as private parking that's perfect for those travelling by car. The carefully curated and surprising designs give UNA Hotels Vittoria Firenze an unforgettable personality.

Italy's first association centre for the meeting industry

The first innovative hub of its kind in Italy, the **Florence Association Centre** is aimed at revolutionizing the meeting industry. Spearheaded by **Fondazione Destination Florence** alongside the **Municipality of Florence**, it's designed to attract both Italian and international associations by offering them the chance to establish local offices in Florence, enabling the better facilitation of event planning while fostering the growth of local scientific and academic communities.



Launched in June 2025, Fondazione Destination Florence supports the identifying of venues in the city and relationships with relevant entities, as well as the possibility of using spaces for board meetings at **Firenze Fiera**. Interested organizations will be provided with a one-time **grant for business development and communication projects**. These benefits are complemented by the **development of institutional relationships**, particularly with the **University of Florence** and **local research centres and hospitals**, as well as training programmes and collaboration with the city's **Advisory Board**, composed of leading local figures who act as ambassadors. This opportunity is currently unprecedented in Italy and seeks to enhance Florence's global standing in the meetings and knowledge industry. With a **90% conversion rate** in attracting international conferences, Florence is already a strong player. **In 2023, nearly 11,700 events brought in over 800,000 participants**, thanks to the efforts of **Fondazione Destination Florence and Firenze Fiera**, with 17 future events expected to generate €38

million and attract **16,000 delegates** by 2028, an increase of 17% compared to 2023.

Florence aims to transition from a traditional tourism model to a **sustainable, knowledge-driven destination**, connecting science, academia, business, and culture. The first association to join the initiative is **AISL, the International Association of Research on Genetics and the Molecular Biology of Yeast**, which will help integrate advanced research into Tuscany's key industries like agri-food and biotech.

The strategic, future-facing move to attract innovation, build international networks, and support high-value, manageable tourism, marks a **historic and strategic development** for the city and Italy that aligns economic, scientific, and cultural growth through conference tourism.

Laura Masi, President of Fondazione Destination Florence, elaborates: "Thanks to our in-depth knowledge of the local context, constant dialogue with public and private stakeholders, and our vast network of international relations, our foundation has a privileged

viewpoint. It is the best starting point for designing and/or facilitating initiatives, programmes, and projects that can highlight and enhance the unique qualities of Florence and its surrounding area. The Florence Association Centre is part of this role. Through this initiative, we attract and welcome outstanding national and international associations.

Our goal is to build a **dynamic ecosystem that connects expertise, institutions, and communities**. Florence thus becomes a hub of innovation and knowledge that's open to the world. It's a strategic and concrete step towards high-quality tourism with high added value."

Florence as a key destination for meetings and events tourism

A notable increase in both the number and quality of events has been reported by OICE, the Italian Observatory of Congresses and Events. **In 2024, the city hosted 10,938 events across 191 venues, attracting over 1.3 million attendees**, marking growth (+8.9%). The sector continues to grow steadily, with five international conferences awarded in the first few months of the year thanks to the joint work of **Fondazione Destination Florence** and **Firenze Fiera**, and with the recent launch of the **Florence Association Centre**, the first hub in Europe dedicated to the development of the meeting industry.

Investment in sustainability, digital transition, and staff training is also strong, with 91% of venues investing in 2024 and 78% planning further investments in 2025.

In terms of infrastructure, 86.9% of venues were active in 2024, with conference hotels, unconventional spaces, and historic residences leading the way. **The Firenze Fiera exhibition centre remains a key location for large-scale events**. The economic outlook for 2025 is positive, with a **projected 31.8% increase in events and 9.5% growth in employment**.

Florence continues to attract prestigious international conferences, generating significant economic impact. **By 2028, the city expects to host 17 major events, bringing an estimated 38 million euros in revenue**.



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Vision 2025 comes to Florence

The 15th International Conference on Low Vision Research and Rehabilitation takes place from September 8-12, 2025, at the **Palazzo dei Congressi. Firenze Fiera was a key partner in this bid, along with Fondazione Destination Florence and OIC.** Cutting-edge scientific innovation is welcomed in Florence for the conference led by three top Italian organizations in low vision research: The Low Vision Academy, PRISMA (Professionals for Low Vision Rehabilitation and Associated Diseases), and the National Center for Services and Research for the Prevention of Blindness and Rehabilitation of the Visually Impaired. As host of the conference, Firenze Fiera made numerous improvements regarding the accessibility of the venue. LOC President and Low Vision Academy Scientific Coordinator **Paolo G. Limoli** tells more.

How important was the collaboration with Fondazione Destination Florence in achieving this important event for Florence, and how instrumental was your role as Ambassador?

Fondazione Destination Florence was crucial in bringing about the events necessary to organize a conference on the scale of Vision 2025, featuring over 300 speakers from around the world, delivering approximately 650 presentations. Clearly, such a superlative organizational machine needed the scientific expertise embodied by the Ambassadors, who enabled and fostered the formation of a scientific consortium made up of the leading Italian associations and institutions: Low Vision Academy, Prisma, and IAPB, without which Vision 2025 would never have been realized. Personally, the creation of this program represents the recognition of a career entirely dedicated to the restoration and recovery of patients' impaired vision. Having encountered the organizational professionalism of OIC allowed us to achieve what at first seemed insurmountable, especially given the social moment characterized



by a pandemic like COVID-19, incomprehension between states around the world, and fundamental changes in global geopolitical structures. Thus, our conference proposal, with the support of Fondazione Destination Florence, Firenze Fiera and OIC, and the backdrop of the city of Florence, was able to determine the victory of the Italian bid for Vision 2025.

What impact can scientific events like these have on a destination like Florence, not only economically, but also scientifically and culturally?

I believe that the economic contribution of a global event like Vision 2025 is not only linked to the number of people

who come to Florence thanks to the conference and the needs they may have during their stay. The arrival of an audience from around the world can bring the beauty and history of Florence to their communities, sparking curiosity and a desire to learn about the Florentine and Tuscan world, with unprecedented positive feedback. Furthermore, the scientific and cultural value of the congress in question give the city of Florence a sort of modern cultural primacy that

had already been traditionally achieved in the Middle Ages with the birth of Italian literature and the development of art and thought. Being able to bring together artistic and scientific minds from such diverse backgrounds contributes to the distinctive and unique character that distinguishes the city of Florence throughout the world.

www.vision2025florence.com

OIC Group expands to Brussels



OIC Group, a leading **Professional Congress Organizer specializing in medical-scientific, institutional, and corporate events across more than 60 countries**, is set to open a new branch in Brussels in autumn 2025. Marking a new phase of international growth, this strategic expansion into the heart of the European Union reflects the group's aim to strengthen relationships with European institutions and associations.

The move coincides with **OIC's 50th anniversary**, marking half a century since its founding in Florence in 1975 under the name Bonamici Organizzazione Internazionale Congressi. Alongside the Brussels opening, the company will also unveil a **rebranding** initiative that aligns with its global vision and strategic evolution.

Irene Serio, daughter of founder Annarita Bonamici and a long-standing executive within the company, became CEO in April 2025. She leads the company into this new chapter, emphasizing **sustainable growth, innovation, and digital transformation**.

With over 100 professionals, offices in Florence, Milan, and now Brussels, and 500+ events annually, OIC Group invests in talent, technology, and strategic design to deliver high-impact events worldwide. Serio elaborates: "We are going through a time of profound transformation, in which organizations must be agile, visionary, and capable of operating in a truly international dimension. In our fiftieth year of activity, we choose to look forward, with the aim of strengthening the global presence of OIC Group and consolidating a solid, innovative structure oriented towards generating sustainable and long-lasting value for customers, partners, and territories. Growth, for us, is not a question of volumes but of impact: it means bringing design culture, operational reliability, and strategic vision to the most relevant contexts of the global arena. We look to the future with ambition and responsibility, strengthened by a history that inspires us and a vision that guides us."

www.oic.it

Heartfelt hospitality at Rivoli Boutique Hotel

Located at **via della Scala 33**, Rivoli Boutique Hotel embodies a quintessential Italian friendliness and luxury hospitality in the beating heart of Florence.



Converted into a hotel in the early 1960s, **the four-star boutique hotel** is enclosed within the walls of a 14th-century Franciscan convent, offering a mindful approach to slow tourism with historic landmarks at your fingertips. Guests enjoy sunlit gardens and the calm of a centuries-old cloister, with elegant lounges, serene spas, and convivial seasonal restaurants.

With **piazza Santa Maria Novella** mere steps away, Rivoli Boutique Hotel is situated opposite Officina Profumo-Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella, the oldest pharmacy in Europe that is now a museum narrating Florentine history through perfumes and artisanal products. All major landmarks are within walking distance, while **the city's main conference venue is just a ten-minute stroll away**, making the hotel's strategic location convenient for all types of travellers.

The hotel offers a variety of **82 rooms**: Comfort rooms offer a pleasant and cozy atmosphere ideal for short stays, with honey-coloured parquet

floors framing **both antique and contemporary design elements**. Family rooms provide a spacious and welcoming atmosphere, while Romantic, Prestige, and Deluxe rooms are ideal for couples' retreats, each decorated with warm tones and custom furnishings. The hotel additionally offers ample meeting rooms on the doorstep of Santa Maria Novella station, equipped for up to 80 people. Wellness is at the heart of Rivoli's slow tourism mission. Nestled in the peace and quiet of the Franciscan patio, guests can rejuvenate with the **Finnish sauna, Turkish bath, emotional cascade shower, and a range of relaxing massages**.

Guests can also experience genuine local flavours, from a generous buffet breakfast featuring Italian, American, and Asian dishes to the refined garden bar offering cocktails (with the Florentine Negroni taking centre stage), a studied wine list, and traditional and innovative culinary creations at the **Benedicta Restaurant**.



What makes Rivoli Boutique Hotel special is not just tradition or experience—it's the **independent family management** that has upheld the essence of **authentic Italian hospitality for over 70 years**. The story began in 1950 when **Mirra Vegni in Caridi** opened humble room rentals for pilgrims ahead of the Catholic Jubilee. Her passion for hosting swiftly led to managing guesthouses and small hotels. Yet it was her son, Gianni, who enacted a generational leap. After gaining tourism experience in London, he returned to Florence, purchasing

a Canossian convent. With a clear vision and respect for its origins, he converted the convent into today's Rivoli Boutique Hotel in 1963.

With engineer **Chiara Caridi's** arrival in the 1990s, the family soul was enriched with authenticity and professionalism. Thus **ARS Collection Firenze** was born, an esteemed hotel group that includes the Rivoli Boutique Hotel, the Grand Hotel Adriatico, two restaurants, and an array of short-stay apartments - all of which reflect slow-paced Italian charm.



With renovation works that began in 2024, Rivoli Boutique Hotel has embraced a new identity for this new era of tourism, one that continues to reflect the principles of the Caridi family: **classic Italian craftsmanship** built upon structure and discipline, aiming to **deliver genuine hospitality for mindful visitors**.

Chiara Caridi actively led the architectural and interior design process, commissioning trusted local artisans and professionals to craft an exclusive result. Highlights of the renovation include redesigned floors to enlarge rooms and bathrooms, custom-designed furnishings made by **local artisans**, restored antiques and valuable pieces, fresh colour scheme, classic herringbone parquet flooring, soundproofed Deluxe Rooms, and newly installed charging stations. The bathrooms have Carrara marble finishes and spacious walk-in showers with chromotherapy and customizable water jets. Select showers include Verde Marina marble seats and bathroom amenities by historic Florentine perfume laboratory Farmacia della SS. Annunziata, with all choices placing **sustainability, care, and elegance** at the centre.

Indian wedding elegance meets Tuscan charm

Photos by Gianni Aiazzi

How to accommodate a 200+ person wedding that sees five events spanning over three days in the perfect venues in a foreign country? A mission wedding planner, **LaToya Patel**, successfully executed when her company, **SW Events**, was tasked with planning a destination wedding for the three-day Hindu and Sikh ceremony between Svena and Sukhjjevan that took place from June 4-6, with a dream venue in Tuscany of the utmost importance to the couple. **Tuscany for Weddings** (www.tuscanyforweddings.com), the dedicated division of **Fondazione Destination Florence** operating on behalf of **Toscana Promozione Turistica**, provided invaluable recommendations that supported the success of the event, with SW Events leading the planning and execution. But what made them decide on Tuscany for this important wedding? "The bride studied for a semester in Florence, and it seems it stole her heart a little," LaToya tells us. Tuscany definitely fosters heartfelt connections, with its bucolic rolling hills and romance around every corner, making it an easy choice for couples.

From her UK-based company, LaToya and her team crafted memorable days that were full of personality and tailored to the individual couple, thanks also to wonderful support and recommendations provided by Tuscany for Weddings. The first moment of connection between LaToya and Tuscany for Weddings was at a B2B event in Vienna in 2019. It led to a recommendation to LaToya's agency to participate in the **BUY Tuscany** event in Arezzo, which was then followed by a related post-tour Fam Trip in 2023, all the way up to the realization of the event in Tuscany. Each step helped build trust and personalized the guidance and support even further, all resulting in a smooth process when it came to the large-scale event.

"When we were searching for the venue, we reached out to **Chiara of Tuscany for Weddings** to ask if she had any recommendations for the size and scale of what we were looking to do. She sent

a curated list of venues and key contacts for us, which was really helpful." Given the cultural and linguistic complications of hosting a wedding abroad, reassuring assistance is imperative for both the couple and the wedding planner. "Chiara was incredible. When we were out with the couple for our final visit, she came and met with them, which was really lovely."

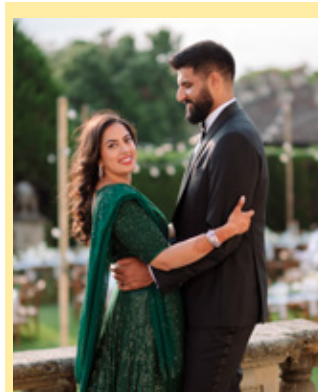
It was the beautiful scenery and architecture at **Villa Castelletti**, northwest of Signa, that sold the couple. With the capacity for large events and confident hosts, the catering setup made the villa an incredibly guest-friendly venue, unique to Italian hospitality. "You have a tasting space and a layout of all the different cutlery, crockery, glassware, and table linen, and you can walk around and move things. Physically being able to see everything together and create your table setting directly in front of you is an experience that you don't get in every location."



A three-day celebration to be split between four venues, the couple chose **Tenuta di Artimino** nestled in the Carmignano hills for three of their events, a property that "just sells itself," LaToya recounts. Having stopped off for a pizza lunch at Circolo di Artimino-between venue visits, LaToya and her clients fell in love with the uniquely Tuscan rusticity, and, of course, the food. "The restaurant felt like a really great setting for one of their more informal pre-wedding events."

Tuscany is an accessible region, with major stations and well-connected motorways. "A number of guests hired cars, and there was an excellent overall ease of movement to get around in Tuscany. Also, proximity to other places that people wanted to visit worked out really well, because a lot of guests turned it into a holiday."

LaToya's efforts in pulling off memorable events have not gone unnoticed: she is the recent **People's Choice recipient from the Amour Awards**. A success on all accounts, this Indian-Tuscan celebration not only stands as a testament to LaToya Patel's impeccable award-winning event planning but also to the lure of Tuscany as an accessible, friendly, and beautiful wedding location benefitted by the invaluable support system offered by Tuscany for Weddings that eased both the couple's and the planner's experience.



The event was organized with the involvement of:

Day 1

Event: Jago & Sangeet

Venue: Villa Castelletti

Day 2

Events: Haldi & Hindu Ceremony

Venues: Circolo Di Artimino Da Mario (for the Haldi) / **Tenuta di Artimino** (for the Hindu ceremony)

Day 3

Events: Anand Karaj ceremony and reception

Venues: Gurdwara Sangat Sabha (for the ceremony) / **Tenuta Di Artimino** (for the reception)

Suppliers:

Planners: SW Events

Photography: Gianni Aiazzi

Video: Gee Films

Florist: Flowers Living

Production: Namida Events

DJ: DeeJay JSG

Bride's hair & makeup: Giulia Makeup

Mehndi artists: Chromatika Henna

Indian catering: Haveli (for Days 2+3)

Italian caterer: Delizia Ricevimenti

Turban stylist: Turban Stylist



Photos by Valeria Raniolo



Twenty years of *The Florentine*: connecting Florence to the world

On a late-summer evening, the rooftop of **W Florence** provided the perfect stage to celebrate the 20th anniversary of *The Florentine*, the city's leading English-language magazine. Guests from the international community, local institutions and the tourism sector gathered high above the skyline on September 20, 2025, to mark two decades of publishing and to look toward an ambitious future.

Founded in 2005 from a simple idea—offering news about Florence in English—*The Florentine* has grown into a trusted media brand and an essential reference point for Florence lovers worldwide. Over the years it has chronicled the city's evolution, from cultural milestones to groundbreaking restorations, and has championed initiatives such as art conservation campaigns and contemporary creative projects. Before the rise of social media and the era of overtourism, the magazine was already serving as a bridge between the city and an expanding global audience.

Today, *The Florentine* continues to evolve as a multichannel platform that reaches well beyond the printed page. A redesigned website, a suite of newsletters, community events and bespoke publications all contribute to a dynamic ecosystem that shares Florence and Tuscany with an international readership. Recent editorial collaborations include **DF Magazine** for Fondazione Destination Florence, **The Curators' Quaderno** for the contemporary art scene and **El Duomo** for the city's growing Spanish-speaking community.

A recent readers' survey highlights the strength and quality

of this audience. More than half of respondents are based in the United States, while nearly two-thirds live outside Italy but travel to Florence regularly, often once a year or more. Almost 90 percent hold a university degree and half have postgraduate qualifications. These readers expressed a strong appetite for deeper news analysis, advance information on cultural events, stories about Florence's surrounding towns and opportunities to volunteer or engage with the local community.

Such findings underline the magazine's value as a partner for tourism operators, institutions and the MICE sector. *The Florentine* provides access to a highly educated, internationally minded public that seeks authentic connections and meaningful experiences in Florence and Tuscany.

The anniversary rooftop gathering was more than a celebration of the past; it was a launchpad for the next chapter. With plans for new digital formats, podcasts, masterclasses and innovative storytelling tools, *The Florentine* is poised to expand its role as a cultural laboratory and a platform for dialogue.

After twenty years of continuous publishing, the magazine remains faithful to its founding mission while embracing new ways to share the essence of Florence with the world, a trusted voice for the city and a vibrant meeting point for those who love it, wherever they may live.

Join the conversation: www.theflorentine.net

Advertising + partnership opportunities:
publicita@theflorentine.net

Sustainable tourism around the Estra Firenze Marathon



Partner of the event, **Fondazione Destination Florence** provides hospitality for participants of the historic running event while also promoting cultural itineraries in the area.

international sports tourism, in line with the strategic guidelines outlined by the foundation and already witness with the success of **Grand Départ of the Tour de France** in 2024.

Carlotta Ferrari, director of **Fondazione Destination Florence**, elaborates: “The opportunity to cater to Firenze Marathon participants is the result of our ability to network with the local system and our privileged relationships with hoteliers. This event represents a unique opportunity to enhance not only the historic centre but also the more authentic and lesser-known Florence, offering us the opportunity to provide participants and their families with alternative itineraries for sustainable and widespread tourism. Finally, it’s important to emphasize that this event traditionally takes place in the low season and fits perfectly with the aim of deseasonalizing tourist flows, which is one of the objectives pursued by Fondazione Destination Florence to distribute attendance more evenly and contribute to the sustainable development of the sector.”

“We are very pleased with the birth of this collaboration. We believe that the marathon is not only a major sporting event but above all a major tourism event, capable of attracting enthusiasts from all over the world,” concludes **Diego Petrini**, director of **Firenze Marathon**. “This is why our future goal is to increase the presence of foreign runners. Fondazione Destination Florence will certainly help us in this, thanks to its extensive experience in the tourism sector and in the international promotion of our city.”

Sustainable, high-quality, and widespread tourism that transcends seasonality is the model at the centre of the foundation’s goal, aligning it with the running event scheduled for November 30, 2025, which attracts thousands of participants annually from all over the world. As part of the collaboration, Fondazione Destination Florence welcomes and hosts marathon runners and special guests with dedicated packages and arrangements with hoteliers, as well as a registration bib and other benefits.

One of the top three Italian marathons in terms of number of participants, the unique course passes through the city’s most iconic sites such as the Duomo and Ponte Vecchio,

weaving through piazza della Signoria and the Lungarno. Pre- and post-event, runners can enjoy special agreements with civic museums and local partners that promote Florence’s cultural heritage, offering a complete experience to visitors.

The **World Tourism Organization** gauges that between 12 and 15 million foreigners visit Italy every year for sport-related reasons, representing 20% of the total number of tourists nationally, with a higher-than-average spending power (Centro Studi Turistici). The collaboration with Fondazione Destination Florence marks a concrete step toward building an increasingly attractive Florence for



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Claudio Meli, General Manager of The Place Firenze, named Hotelier of the Year 2025 at VIRTUOSO Travel Week in Las Vegas.

At the helm of The Place Florence, a 20-room boutique hotel on piazza Santa Maria Novella, **Florentine Claudio Meli** has gone beyond the traditional concept of a luxury residence, creating a pioneering formula. Meli became Hotelier of the Year 2025 during the closing night of the 37th edition of Virtuoso Travel Week, held this August in Las Vegas, the world's leading event for luxury and experiential tourism. On September 8, he was presented with the city's official parchment, the Pergamena, as a symbol of the city's recognition and gratitude. The ceremony was held in the Salone dei Cinquecento of Palazzo Vecchio, in the presence of City Councillor for Economic Development, Tourism, Trade Fairs and Congresses, Jacopo Vicini.



What does the award mean to you?

This award is a great double satisfaction: it's not just for its prestige and being recognized on a global level, but to have received it in relation to a small hotel of only 20 rooms, with Italian owners. The victory is for the artisanality of the experience we offer. It's an **homage to my city**. Special thanks go to the **Babini family**, owners of the hotel that's part of **The Hospitality Experience** collection, who have always given me the freedom to express my creativity and share the same values. For us, the future means continuing to tell the story of Florence to help visitors discover its truest soul.



What does hospitality mean to you?

Hospitality is my passion. From the very beginning of my career as a concierge affiliated with the Les Clefs d'Or, I have always strived to surprise my guests with **unexpected and out-of-the-ordinary experiences** in my beloved Florence. To me, hospitality is humanity: it means listening to and understanding each guest, with their tastes and personality, and crafting a **tailor-made experience** for each one, always different and unique. Nothing is standardized at The Place Florence. We've never had a traditional check-in procedure. We sit down with guests and share our love for this city.

What keeps you passionate about your work?

Every day is a new challenge. In 30 years of my career, I have never experienced two days that were the same. I love the opportunity to be innovative in a world of hospitality that often risks falling victim to globalization, becoming devoid of personality and sense of place. I write books, constantly discover new hidden gems to present to our guests, and through our foundation dedicated to artisans, *The Place of Wonders*, **we give back value and support to the local community of master artisans**. All of this is possible thanks to an extraordinary team that shares my adventures and values. We've managed to grant 28 scholarships to young people training to be artisans.

What is your opinion of the hotel industry in the city, and how could it be improved or transformed?

We have to valorize our traditions and improve what tourists are presented with when they come to the city. It's a wonderful thing that the city has masterpieces like Michelangelo's *David* and so on, but that's not all that Florence offers. When you present the Florentine lifestyle to visitors - the food, art, culture - they become addicted. That's the magic that brings them back time and time again. Fundamentally, it's a discussion about the quality of the experience, and in our small way, The Place of Wonders is how we play our part. We bring them to **discover artisans, giving them a sense of the identity of Florence**.



Director of Polimoda, Massimiliano Giornetti, tells Destination Florence Magazine about the fashion school's forward-thinking philosophy.

What's Polimoda's role in the international fashion scene today?

Polimoda plays a crucial role. It blends creativity with anthropology, sociology, marketing and communication, looking at fashion in all its meanings in the belief that fashion is not simply clothes but a profound expression of the self. We also offer event management, art direction and costume design, giving new prospects for professional growth.

How do you reconcile Polimoda's international vocation with the cultural and artisanal roots of Florence?

The idea 40 years ago to create an international fashion polytechnic in Florence stemmed from the city's medieval roots. Important craft communities – such as those of tanners, weavers and dyers – allowed Florence to emerge as the capital of the Renaissance. **It is this culture of know-how, which has been handed down over the centuries, that is the strength of Made in Italy.** The combination of traditional craftsmanship and industrial innovation is inseparable. No other production centre in the world has the breadth and depth of Florence and its province. Exploring everything from fabrics, façon, accessories and tanning to metals and leather goods has made it possible to create a unique production hub with which the school is inextricably linked.

What are the most in-demand skills in the fashion world today, and how do you prepare a student to become a well-rounded professional?

Precise, specialized skills are highly sought after. On the one hand are digital skills, and by contrast, artisanal. The future will be increasingly hybrid, with the acute awareness that technology will support and improve the quality of craftsmanship, but that no machine, in fashion, can ever replace the ability to creatively problem solve.

Fashion and sustainability: how real is the transformation of the sector in this direction today? And how does Polimoda face this challenge?



It's a fundamental transformation. It's very necessary that we face it. Gen Z was born with a culture and work ethic that means they are action-oriented and make fashion more transparent and inclusive. All these values represent our educational drive towards the future; to make the fashion sector less oriented towards the concept of status symbols and more as a personal and cultural expression.

Is there a recent project, collaboration or initiative that you are particularly proud of and that showcases the spirit of Polimoda?

Every Applied Project - educational projects developed in collaboration with businesses - has its own strength and value not only in terms of design, but above all in terms of education. It's the principle behind research: free experimentation that leads to innovation. The triangle between the industry, school and students allows us to go beyond the boundaries of comfort zones and to seek, even through error, what is not yet known. Fashion has a frenetic pace that tends to impoverish research applied to materials, consumer habits, digital innovation and new forms of distribution. Working in synergy with the university thus becomes necessary, both for the industry and for students, who

are as yet free from the grip that the world of work inevitably mandates. Among the most interesting projects of recent months was the collaboration with Silhouette for the definition of the concept store *House of Silhouette* and the docufilm *Le Mani della Moda* in collaboration with Gruppo Florence. **Being able to concretize vital values for the fashion industry such as craftsmanship and tradition, while emphasizing the natural drive towards innovation, remains a priority for Polimoda.**

How important is it for a school like Polimoda to be based in Florence? How does the city – with its cultural heritage, craft vocation and international appeal – affect the educational experience of students?

Globalization has led to an excessive dispersion of know-how. Today, students are more fascinated by the idea of being mobile, not settled in a single location, than in the past. However, an excess of internationalization can generate fragility in planning and in the intent to preserve that cultural heritage and tradition that characterize the genius loci. I consider cultural heritage to be an important heritage for Florence. Polimoda is committed to preserving the culture of know-how, because it guarantees our uniqueness.

GRAND BALL REGINE A PALAZZO

Palazzo Vecchio, Salone dei Cinquecento, Florence

31.01.2026

&

01.02.2026

(Parade)



Villa Casagrande: timeless elegance in the heart of Tuscany

Nestled in the village of **Figline e Incisa Valdarno**, between Florence, Arezzo, and Siena, **Villa Casagrande is a historic late 14th-century residence** transformed into a refined resort with a spa. Here, history, authenticity, and attention to detail combine, creating a unique atmosphere for those who want to experience Tuscany authentically.

The villa offers 72 accommodations, including **elegant rooms, refined suites, and independent apartments, including studios and one-bedroom apartments**, designed to meet every need. Some of the most exclusive suites overlook the Italian garden, offering views of the lush greenery that invite relaxation and tranquility. The apartments with kitchenettes allow for greater independence without sacrificing the comfort and services of the resort, making **Villa Casagrande ideal for both leisure stays and as a base for events or meetings**.

The Piano Nobile

The **Piano Nobile**, the historic heart of the villa, recounts centuries of history: period furnishings, paintings, and Renaissance architectural details evoke the Serristori legacy. The elegant and bright **Averardo Hall** can accommodate up to 50 people, making it the perfect setting for civil ceremonies, receptions, and private events. The Piano Nobile **can be reserved exclusively** for you, offering an even more intimate and private experience.

Events and weddings

For those dreaming of a **fairy-tale wedding**, the historic garden features a small and stunning private chapel that's perfect for intimate religious ceremonies for up to 20 people. From the cloister to the gardens and interior rooms, every space can be customized, creating a superb setting for celebrating unforgettable moments.

Interior spaces such as the **Sala Cesare** and the **Sala Bianca** are designed for **meetings, workshops, and corporate events**, while the restaurant, cloister, and gardens offer charming settings for coffee breaks, company retreats, or social gatherings.

Gastronomic experiences

The **Terrae Casagrande Restaurant** offers traditional Tuscan dishes reinterpreted with taste and creativity. During the winter months, guests are welcomed into the **Sala d'Armi**, while in the warmer seasons, the **cloister** offers an intimate atmosphere for outdoor lunches and dinners. On the hill overlooking the villa, **Cielo Casagrande** welcomes guests with a **restaurant, bar, and panoramic pool**, perfect for sunset aperitifs, relaxed brunches, and informal events immersed in the Tuscan countryside.

Spa and wellness

Villa Casagrande's spa is an intimate retreat where you can re-



discover balance and serenity, surrounded by the history and beauty of the residence. A **sau-na, Turkish bath, hot tub, and relaxation area** invite you to indulge in a reinvigorating break, while **personalized treatments and massages** transform every moment into a sensory experience designed to rejuvenate both mind and body. The indoor pool, which is accessible to all guests, completes the offering, allowing you to swim laps or simply relax in a warm and welcoming environment that's ideal in any season.

Activities and team building

Villa Casagrande offers experiences designed for wellness and team building, including **life coaching, slow life yoga, biking and hiking, walks, and meditation**—perfect activities for strengthening bonds and experiencing harmony.



With its versatile blend of history, elegance and comfort, Villa Casagrande is the ideal destination for exclusive stays, corporate events, and dream weddings, immersed in an authentic and timeless atmosphere.

www.villacasagrande.it



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