

bargain at markets, except for food items.

**Tipping:** Generally a 15% service charge is added to restaurant bills, however, as this amount doesn't all go to the waiter, it is normal to offer a 5% tip to the waiter in addition to any service charge. For taxi drivers, a 5 – 10% tip is acceptable.

**Local Cuisine:** Pasta is most widely associated with Italian cuisine and there are many different types of pasta as well as sauces to accompany them. Try Fazzoletti, pasta filled with ricotta cheese and spinach. Some Tuscan specialties include; Ribollita, which is a variation on Minestrone, Pappardelle – broad noodles, Stracotto, a beef stew with beans, and Bistecca alla Fiorentina, a charcoal grilled T-Bone steak marinated in olive oil and black pepper.

**Drink Specialties:** Espresso and Capuccino coffees are very popular. It is common in Italian cafes to take a coffee standing at the bar and often there is no seating. Chianti is the most famous wine of Italy, but the region of Tuscany produces a number of very good quality wines. Bottled water is recommended.

**SHOPPING FACILITIES** The Italians are renowned for their sense of dress and style, it is not surprising therefore, to find plenty of quality clothes stores and boutiques, particularly in Florence where the designer boutiques are to be found along Via de'Tornabuoni and Via della Vigna Nuova. Shops are also found on Via Calzaiuoli and Via del Corso. Apart from clothing, quality leather products are also plentiful and considered good value for money. Mosaics and inlays are specialties, as are gold items which can be found in Florence around the Ponte Vecchio. For souvenirs check-out the Straw Market (Mercato Nuovo), also in Florence, located at Via Calimala. Some tourist orientated stores may accept U.S. Dollars, most accept major credit cards.

Value Added Tax (VAT), is added to most purchases. Visitors who spend over a certain amount may be entitled to re-claim some or all of the tax paid, however, regulations and conditions governing the refund of VAT are subject to change and RCCL cannot guarantee the cooperation of local authorities.

**LOCAL CURRENCY** The unit of currency in this port of call is the euro. Every euro coin carries a common European face. On the obverse, each Member State decorates the coins with their own motifs. No matter which motif is on the coins they can be used anywhere inside the Member States. There are 7 euro notes. The notes are uniform throughout the euro area. All euro notes are legal tender in all countries of the euro area.

**POST OFFICE AND TELEPHONE FACILITIES** The closest Post Office to the ship is located at #12, Piazza Verdi, La Spezia.

Most public telephones take local coins and/or telephone cards which can be purchased at the Post Office or Tobacconists. You can also place a call with your personal calling card using the following access codes:

AT&T: 800.172.444

MCI: 800.90.5825

**TOURIST INFORMATION** The Municipal Tourist Office in Florence is located on Borgo Santa Croce. There is also a Tourist Information Office in Piazza della Signoria, Florence.

The La Spezia Tourist Information Office is located at #45 Viale Mazzini.

**TRANSPORTATION** There are a few taxis available at the pier. The ancient and historic city of Florence is closed to most automobile traffic. It is suggested to wear comfortable walking shoes when entering Florence as the great majority of sightseeing must be done by foot.

**USEFUL WORDS AND PHRASES**

Yes • Si

No • No

Good Day • Buon Giorno

Good-bye • Arrivederci

Thank-you • Grazie

You're Welcome • Prego

**NOTES**

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**PORT EXPLORER & SHOPPING GUIDE**

**Florence-Pisa-La Spezia ITALY**

**GENERAL INFORMATION** La Spezia is located on the northwest coast of Italy roughly half way between Pisa and Genoa. The city looks out over what is romantically referred to as the “Golfo dei Poeti” (Gulf of Poets). Modern day La Spezia, the provincial capital, has grown over many centuries from what once was a small fishing village into an industrial center, a major commercial port and Italy's largest Naval Base. It is a city of moderate size with a population approaching 175,000. Fortification of the city began in the 800s and continued through the ages. The navy base and shipyards were targeted by Allied bombers during World War II and as a consequence the city had to undertake extensive reconstruction in years following the war. Today La Spezia is the gateway to, Florence, Pisa, and “Cinque Terre” the beautifully rugged coastal region and terraced villages of the eastern Italian Riviera.

The climate is typically Mediterranean, the topography a combination of fertile valleys and sloping green hills on which Cypress trees thrive. The beauty of the countryside is featured in many paintings created by some of the most famous renaissance artists who flocked to Florence during this period.

The people of the area are noted for their charm, generosity and taste for good living. They take great pride in their art and architectural treasures.

Pisa is situated a little inland, approximately 54 miles from La Spezia, on the banks of the River Arno. It was once a republic and city of commercial importance, and bears witness to this period with its majestic buildings and art works, the most famous being the Leaning Tower.

Florence, also found on the River Arno some 92 miles from La Spezia, dates from 800 BC when a settlement was first established at a fording point on the river. Florence is a beautiful city, small and compact with narrow streets and large open squares. It is the 6th largest city in Italy, with a population of 500,000. The old quarter, with its renaissance architecture, paintings and sculptures, could almost be described as a living museum.

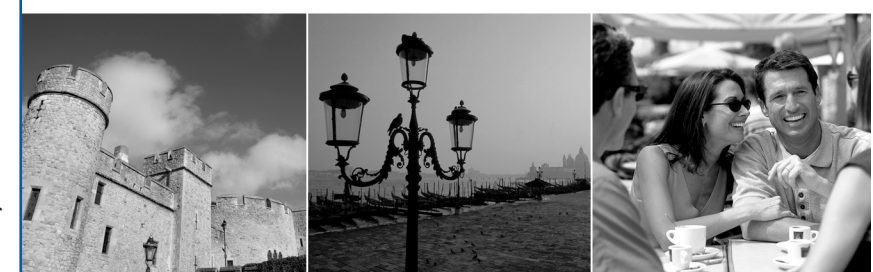
**HISTORY** In the early 1600s the powerful ruling families of Genoa brought La Spezia into the Republic. Having annexed the region into his empire in the early 1800s, it was Napoleon Bonaparte who first laid the plans to develop the city into a major naval base. Following the defeat of Napoleon and the rise of the Kingdom of Italy the plans for the construction of a major base and shipyard were finally carried through. The city played a large and important role in the building of Italy's navy. Due to the large naval presence the city was a prime target for Allied bombers in World War II. Immediately following the end of the war La Spezia became an important departure point for thousands of Jews who had been liberated from the death camps and were seeking to sail to Palestine.

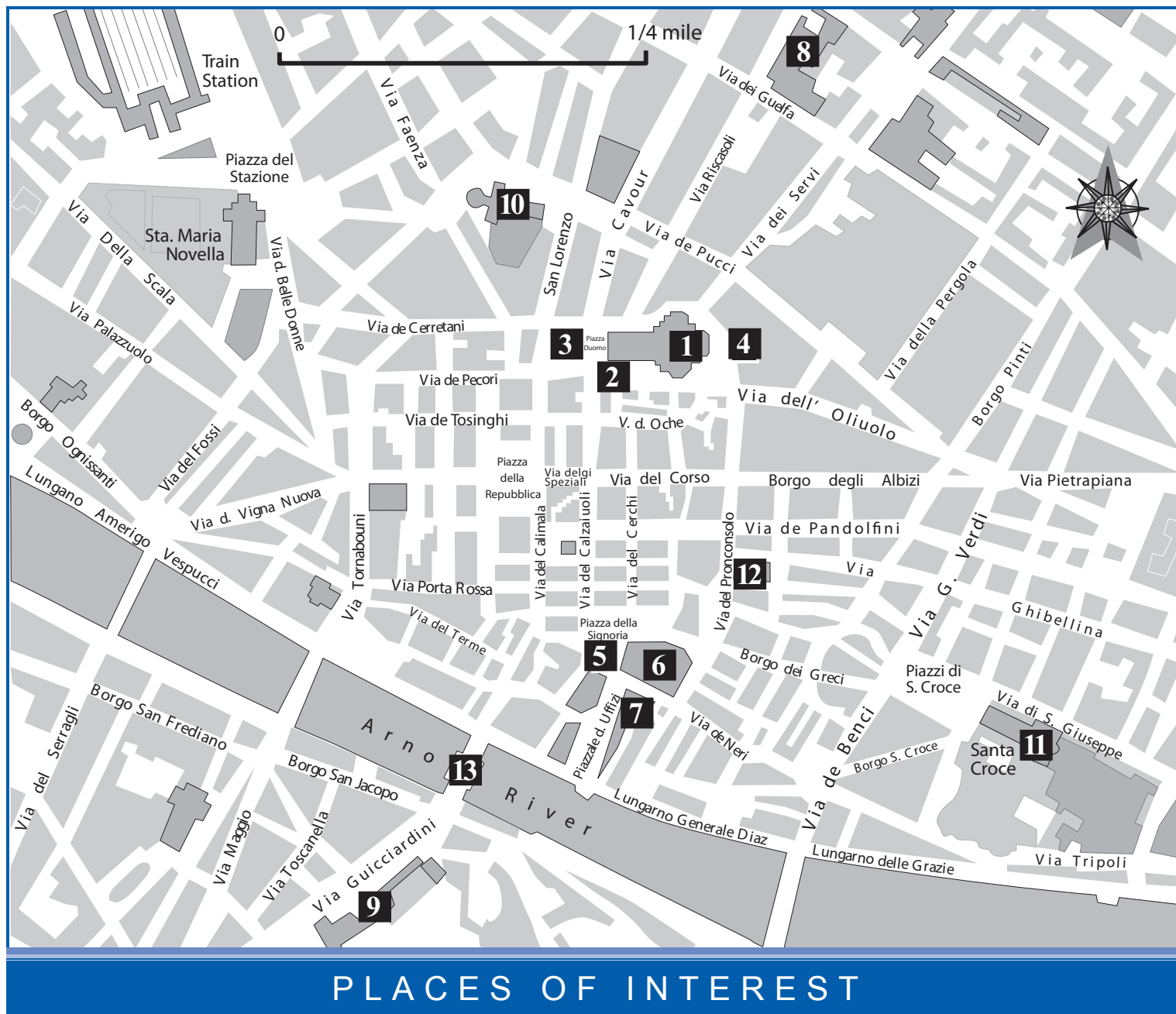
Florence and Pisa developed as Roman military trading towns. With the decline of the Roman Empire there endured a period of chaos, during which various peoples vied for control, including; the Byzantines, Goths and Lombards. It wasn't until the 8th century, with the introduction of Feudalism, that any kind of structured organization existed at all.

While Pisa had been a republic since the post-Roman period and had continued to flourish as a commercial and seafaring town, Florence didn't become self-governing until 1138. Shortly thereafter, Pisa fell under the control of Florence.

It was in the 13th century that the balance of power was transferred from the wealthy to the merchant population, and this brought about a period of economic growth, with Florence emerging as an important European center of finance and commerce.

Florence suffered greatly in 1347 and 1348 when at least half of its population were lost to the ‘Black Death’ (Plague).





## PLACES OF INTEREST

In 1422 Giovanni Bicci Medici was elected Chief of the Republic of Florence and the control of the community returned to the wealthy. Prosperity continued and the Medici family remained in power for over 300 years, devoting much of their wealth to art and science. Following the romanesque and gothic styles of the medieval period, the reign of the

Medicis coincided with the start of the Renaissance period and artists such as Michelangelo, Leonardo Da Vinci and Raphael all found inspiration in Florence and contributed to the city's works of art and architecture.

Florence was incorporated into Italy in 1860 and was recognized as the country's capital during the period from 1865, until Rome was chosen in 1870.

During World War II Florence suffered some damage as the retreating Germans blew up the City's bridges, all except the Ponte Vecchio.

### PLACES OF INTEREST

#### In La Spezia

The **Amedeo Lia Museum** houses an incredible assortment of medieval and Renaissance art. On display are over 1,000 paintings and sculptures donated from the private collection of the gentlemen after whom the museum is named. The museum itself is a 17th century Franciscan monastery that underwent extensive and exacting renovation in order to be able to accept the art and display it all to its best advantage. Among the beautiful paintings are works by the great masters, Bellini and Titian.

The **Castle of Saint George** sits upon a small hill known as Poggio and overlooks the bay and the Old Town of La Spezia. The original fortification was designed and constructed in the mid 1200s under the direction of the powerful Genoese nobleman and Roman Catholic Cardinal, Niccolò Fieschi. The fort that is seen today dates to extensive renovations that took place in the early 1600's. Some of the artifacts on display in the fort's museum pre-date the Roman Empire.

#### In Florence

**1 Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore** is the second largest cathedral in the world, capable of holding 3,000 people, it also boasts a cupola larger than that of; the Pantheon, St. Peter's in Rome and St. Paul's in London. Begun in 1296, built in gothic style, it took 140 years to complete. Climb the 463 steps to the Cupola Gallery for a panoramic view of the City.

**2 Bell Tower**, a free-standing tower adjacent to the Cathedral, stands 292 feet high and dates from the 14th century. The Tower is reputed to be one of the most beautiful in the world, decorated in colored marble. 414 steps take you to the top, for a fine view of the City.

**3 Baptistry**, an octagonal structure built in the 11th century, in romanesque style, contains many mosaics dating from the 13th and 14th centuries. It is famous for its three bronze gates on the east-side, designed by Ghiberti and referred to by Michelangelo as the 'Gates of Paradise', (the originals are now housed in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo nearby).

**4 Museo dell'Opera del Duomo** contains some superb sculptures, including Michelangelo's unfinished Pieta, intended for his tomb.

**5 Piazza della Signoria** is the City's largest square and represents the historical and commercial center. The Neptune Fountain can be found here, and the side-walk cafes attract Florentines and tourists alike.

**6 Palazzo della Signoria (Palazzo Vecchio)** dominates the Piazza, with a copy of Michelangelo's statue of David adorning the stairway, (the original is now in the Accademia Museum). Completed in 1314, the Palace later became the seat of the City's Government and is today the City Hall, containing many frescoes and significant works of art. Loggia della Signoria also in the Piazza of the same name, houses the bronze statuary; 'Perseus' by Cellini and the 'Rape of the Sabines' by Giambologna.

**7 Uffizi Gallery**, located just off Piazza della Signoria, once the administrative offices of the Medici rule, now contains Italy's most important art collection, including gothic and renaissance works by such famous masters as; Giotto, Botticelli, Leonardo Da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael and Rubens.

**8 Accademia Gallery** can be found on Via Ricasoli and contains some of Michelangelo's most important sculptures, including the statue of David.

**9 Pitti Palace** was once the Grand Ducal and Medici residence and the Royal Palace of united Italy from 1865 – 1870, when Florence enjoyed brief recognition as the country's capital city. It now comprises a number of museums including; Museo degli Argenti which exhibits the Medici family's collection of gold, silver, jewels and cameos, Gallery of Modern Art, and the Palatine Gallery which contains a collection of priceless paintings. Boboli Gardens, also located at the Pitti Palace, features 10 acres of ornate Italian gardens.

**10 Church of San Lorenzo**, just off Piazza San Lorenzo, is of renaissance design and contains two sacristies, an early one designed by Brunelleschi, and a newer one, the interior of which was decorated by Michelangelo and includes several of his sculptures.

Medici Chapels, situated just behind the Church of San Lorenzo, contain the tombs of almost the entire Medici family.

**11 Santa Croce**, located on Piazza Santa Croce, was begun in 1294 and built in gothic style. It now contains the tombs of some of Italy's greatest citizens including; Michelangelo, Galileo, Ghiberti and Machiavelli. The adjacent museum contains various frescoes and statues taken from the church.

**12 Bargello Palace** – This austere looking fortress was once the seat of Magistrates and later became a prison. It now contains the National Museum and is considered on a par with the Uffizi Museum, exhibiting many fine Italian renaissance sculptures by such masters as; Michelangelo, Verrocchio and Donatello.

**13 Ponte Vecchio** is the oldest bridge remaining in Florence, lined with goldsmiths' shops, it appears to be a normal street until reaching the middle where the River Arno can be seen flowing beneath.

#### In Pisa

**Leaning Tower**, located at Piazza del Duomo in the Compo dei Miracoli, was begun in 1172, however, having only completed three of the six stories planned, building was abandoned due to the fact that it was leaning. The Tower was completed in the mid-14th century. Standing 180 feet high, built of white marble, it now leans a total of 14 feet from the perpendicular. Cathedral, also located at Piazza del Duomo, was built in 1063 in a simple geometric design. The cavernous interior is supported by 68 columns and it contains some beautiful mosaics. The Baptistry, next to the Tower and Cathedral, was begun in 1152, but not completed until 1284.

#### In Portofino

The famous 1st century scholar and writer Caius Plinius Secundus, more commonly known as Pliny the Elder, is credited with affirming the fact that Portofino was first built and settled by Romans. It would be hard to argue with that statement, after all, the Romans were masters of beauty, grace and charm, all of which Portofino has in abundance. The small natural harbor has, since the beginning, been filled with fishing boats. Today they share space with yachts and pleasure craft. The town has changed hands a few times over the years. It has been owned by a local abbey and later come under the administration of the Republics of Genoa and Florence and the Kingdom of Sardinia. In the 1800s Portofino was rediscovered by well heeled English travelers touring the classic sites of Italy. Ever since then the word has continued to spread about this charming little town tucked away on the coast of the Italian Riviera. Pliny the Elder would no doubt understand. Portofino is approximately 55 miles from La Spezia.

**SHORE EXCURSIONS** To make the most of your visit to La Spezia, Florence, Pisa, and surrounding areas we suggest you take one of our organized Shore Excursions. For information concerning tour content and pricing, consult your Shore Excursion Brochure, Shore Excursion TV Channel or contact the Shore Excursion Desk. When going ashore, be advised to take only necessary items and secure any valuables on board.

**LOCAL CUSTOMS** Bargaining: Most items have fixed prices, but it may be possible to get a discount on a large purchase. It is normal to