

Three Must-See Destinations for the Beginners

Vineyards of Chianti

The Chianti area is one of the most beautiful places in the whole region, as well as the most well-known and appreciated by visitors from around the world.



The borders of the Chianti region are not clearly defined but in general it extends over the provinces of Florence and Siena, covering all of the area between the two cities and extending to the east toward the Valdarno and to the west to the Val d'Elsa. The Chianti wine area extends further beyond the two cities, all around Florence and even toward Arezzo, Pistoia and Montepulciano.

You'll often find references to the "Florentine Chianti" and the "Sienese Chianti" to define the areas closest to one or the other city, but these often refer to a wine's origin within the Chianti region.

Chianti offers a unique landscape, with green, gentle hills covered with wide fields of vineyards and olive groves, small stone villages, characteristic parishes and countryside homes in stone.



Florence – The Cradle of the Renaissance

Florence's museums, palaces, and churches house some of the greatest artistic treasures in the world. The most popular and important sites in Florence include the Cathedral, the Baptistery, the Uffizi, the Bargello, and the Accademia. The churches of Santa Maria Novella and Santa Croce are veritable art galleries, and the library of San Lorenzo is a magnificent exhibition of Michelangelo's architectural genius.

Wander some of the oldest streets in the city until you reach the Arno River, cross the Ponte Vecchio, and experience the "newest" area of Florence, the Oltrarno. Be sure to set aside time to see the vast and

varied art collection housed in the Pitti Palace. When you grow weary of museums and monuments, head outdoors. Spend a day at the Boboli Gardens or climb the hill to the church of San Miniato al Monte to experience an enchanting view of Florence.

Siena: Medieval Tuscany

Siena is probably Italy's loveliest medieval city, and a trip worth making even if you are in Florence and Tuscany for just a few days. Siena's heart is its central piazza known as Il Campo and world renowned for its famous Palio, a festival and horse race that takes place on the piazza itself two times each summer (Movie audiences worldwide can see Siena and the Palio in the last James Bond movie, Quantum of Solace).



Siena is said to have been founded by Senius, son of Remus, one of the two legendary founders of Rome thus Siena's emblem is the she-wolf who nursed Remus and Romulus – you'll find many statues throughout the city. The city sits over three hills with its heart the huge piazza known as Il Campo, where the Roman forum used to be. Rebuilt during the rule of the Council of Nine, a quasi-democratic group from 1287 to 1355, the nine sections of the fan-like brick pavement represent the council and symbolizes the Madonna's cloak which sheltered Siena.

The Campo is dominated by the red Palazzo Pubblico and its tower, Torre del Mangia. Along with the Duomo, the Palazzo Pubblico was also built during the same period of rule by the Council of Nine. The civic palace, built between 1297 and 1310, still houses the city's municipal offices much like Palazzo Vecchio in Florence. Its internal courtyard has entrances to the Torre del Mangia and to the Civic Museum.

If you feel energetic, a climb up the over 500 steps will reward you with a wonderful view of Siena and its surroundings. The Museum, on the other hand, offers some of the greatest of Sienese paintings. The Sala del Concistoro houses one of Domenico Beccafumi's best works, ceiling frescoes of allegories on the virtues of Siena's medieval government. But it is the Sala del Mappamondo and the Sala della Pace that hold the palace's highlights: Simone Martini's huge Maestà and Equestrian Portrait of Guidoriccio da Fogliano and Ambrogio Lorenzetti's Allegories of Good and Bad Government, once considered the most important cycle of secular paintings of the Middle Ages.

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