

botticelli madonna and child Tuscany for Dummies

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Tuscany for Dummies<<http://feedproxy.google.com/%7Er/burrrp/blah/%7E3/bocwon5aRv0/> *It would take any of us at least half a dozen visits to the beautiful country of Italy to get a true sense for all it has to offer. Such varying cultures, foods, climates and topography offer a stunning array of experiences as you travel from North to South, East to West. Yet in all my travels to the Republic, I have yet to come across a more complete experience than that offered by the Tuscan region.* The Tuscan region, also known as Tuscany, is situated towards the central Western portion of Italy. It is widely known for its stunning hilly countryside, it's Chianti wine, and its artistic legacy. Without getting into too much detail, we will try to uncover the must-dos for Tuscan first-timers. That way, when you go back, and we promise you will want to, you can continue to uncover the neverending magic of this beautiful locale. Drive Through Chianti This is an absolute must. Two thirds of the *Tuscan Countryside* is dominated by rolling hills, most of which have been blanketed by olive orchards, family-owned vineyards and medieval mansions. The Chianti region, which covers a vast area of Tuscany, is above all a wine region. The Chianti DOCG appellation is divided into seven subregions (Classico, Colli Aretini, Colli Fiorentini, Colline Pisane, Colli Senesi, Montalbano and Rufina), of which Classico is most famous. Our Chianti drive will focus on the Classico region, which in turn is defined by the towns between Florence and Siena: *Greve, Panzano, Castellina, Gaiole and Radda*. Almost all the famous Chianti estates are located near one of these towns. Once you rent your car in Florence, the most important road to know is the *Chiantigiana* from Florence to Siena, as it penetrates the heart of the region, Chianti Classico. This road will take you through each of the Chianti Classico towns mentioned above. *Reasons to go: The wine, the food, and the natural landscape* Go to Firenze - It's the Renaissance, Stupid! Firenze, or Florence as we may know it, is the capital of the region of Tuscany. Florence was the birthplace of the Italian Renaissance. Politically, economically, and culturally it was just about the most important city in Europe for something approaching 250 years - from sometime before 1300 until the early 1500s. If that's not enough reason to go in itself, read on: - Florentines invented renaissance and neoclassical architecture which revolutionized the way Rome, London, Paris and every other major city in Europe were built - Florentines invented Opera - Gallileo and other scientists pioneered the study of optics, ballistics, astronomy, anatomy, and so on - The Medici Family, perhaps the most powerful and influential family the world has ever seen, arguably invented politics and state-craft - The Art - Arnolfo, Cimabue, Giotto, Nanni di Banco, Uccello, Lorenzo Ghiberti, Donatello, Massaccio, Fra Angelico, Botticelli, Piero della Francesca, Michelangelo, Caravaggio, and Leonardo Da Vinci - need I say more? So here are the must-dos in the city of Florence: 1. Galleria degli Uffizi, Piazzale degli Uffizi, ? +39 055 294883, Tu-Su 8:15AM-6:50PM Justly one of the world's most famous fine art museums. The collections of Renaissance paintings and sculptures from classical antiquity are superb. Included is *The Birth of Venus* by Sandro Boticelli. There are often long lines (several hours' wait is not uncommon) since even before the doors are open. Useful tip: You can call (+39 055 294883) to make a reservation in advance and walk right in, which is strongly recommended if you can spare the extra €4. 2. See David at Accademia Gallery, Via Ricasoli 58-60, Tuesday - Sunday 8:15AM - 6:50PM The Accademia is a popular museum gallery. It is home to Michelangelo's David - the original masterpiece stands tall in the gallery and a digital screen exhibits the perfect structure from all different angles. Also look out for Giambologna's Rape of the Sabines and Botticelli's Madonna and Child and Madonna of the Sea. 3. What's this Duomo everyone keeps talking about? *Santa Maria del Fiore also known as the **Duomo di Firenze** is the city's beautiful cathedral, the symbol of the city. Brunelleschi's huge dome was an engineering feat of the renaissance. A statue of Brunelleschi is sited in the piazza, with his figure looking upwards towards his dome. It is possible to climb the Dome (entrance on the side of the church), which has 464 steps. €6 entrance fee, and usually has a long lineup. 4. Take Cheesy Picture on Ponte Vecchio *Ponte Vecchio* the oldest and most famous bridge over the Arno; the only Florentine bridge to survive WW2. The Ponte Vecchio (literally "old bridge") is lined with shops, traditionally mostly jewellers since the days of the Medici. Vasari's elevated walkway crosses the Arno over the Ponte Vecchio, connecting the Uffizi to the old Medici palace. 5. Catch Killer View of Firenze *Piazzale Michelangelo* (Michelangelo square) plaza on a hilltop with a great view of the city (go there by bus) or climb the stairs and paths from the Lungarno della Zecca. Stay in an Agriturismo! Agriturismo - a combination of the words for "agriculture" and "tourism" in Italian (duh!) - is a style of vacationing in farm house resorts codified into Italian law in 1985. An agriturismo vacation is suitable for everyone, from families with children to couples looking for a more quiet, romantic getaway. Ditch the traditional hotel or hostel stays in Florence or Siena and opt for this rural form of accommodation in one of the many smaller villages between Florence and Siena. I have personally stayed here<<http://www.agriturismosavernano.com/> and can vouch for its amazing setting, family-oriented service, and the best food I've had in Tuscany. Besides, David and Ava, the proprietors, make their own wine and olive oil. Does it get better than that? While budgeting, keep in mind that an Italian agriturismo will usually serve food to guests prepared from raw materials produced on the farm or at least locally. Some will allow the guest to actually participate in the activities surrounding the farm. Despite the rural nature of the lodging, one might expect a rustic experience; yet many *agriturismi* (the plural form of agriturismo) feature rather luxurious accommodations as well as swimming pools. *WARNING: Some agriturismo's are in fact pretty shabby and are just cashing in from the fairweather fanfare behind them now. Make sure you check up on travel websites before booking!* I can assure you that this will be more than enough for your first tour to Tuscany. Are there other places to see, things to do? Of course there are, and that is the beauty of Italy. It is one of the few places in the world that will always have something to offer for return visitors. So until your next time to Italy, enjoy the beautiful region of Tuscany, and don't forget to come back and tell us how it was.