

INTIMATE FLORENCE

For those who know Florence already or for those who wish to visit Florence from a different standpoint than that of the ardent sightseer, we have selected an itinerary which we have chosen to call Intimate Florence. The title reflects a less flamboyant vision of the city, a selection of locations that show the town and its life through the centuries more than its symbol-monuments.

Palazzo Davanzati (Via Porta Rossa. Opening times: M-Sun from 8.15-13.50. The museum is closed the 2nd and 4th Sunday of the month and the 1st-3rd and 5th Monday of the month). The Palace, built by the Davizzi family around mid-14th century, was purchased in 1578 by the Davanzati family (their coat of arms is still visible on the facade) and remained in their possession until 1838, when it was divided into several flats and suffered severe damage. In 1904 it was purchased and restored by the antique dealer Elia Volpi, who entirely furnished it and opened it to the public in 1910 as Museum of the Old Florentine House. After alternate events, which comprised also the dispersion of the furniture pieces, the palace was purchased in 1951 by the State that reorganised it and opened it once more to the public in 1956. A charming example of medieval home with its bedrooms and bathrooms and kitchen as well as the beautiful reception rooms with the wonderful wall decorations.

From here walk past the **Church of Orsanmichele** on the via Calzaioli. This interesting building, was multi-functional, a church on the ground floor, the seat of the powerful guilds, great patrons of the Renaissance artists on the first floor and the city's granary on the top floor. The statues commissioned by the guilds, that can be found in the niches surrounding the buildings are now housed in the Bargello Museum and these are copies, but if you don't have the time to visit the Bargello (well worth the time) at least notice the copies of the masterpieces executed by Donatello, Verrocchio and Gianbologna amongst others. The Church is often closed, but if you are lucky enough to find it open, note the beautiful altar and altarpiece by Andrea Orcagna and the Madonna delle Grazie by Bernardo Daddi, a disciple of Giotto.

Cross the Cathedral square and turn into Via dell'Oriolo. As you access it, on the left at n° 24, is a small garden and in that a building which is the **Museum of "Firenze Com'era" (Open 9.30-13.30 M-W, and Fr-Sun)** This little museum houses an interesting collection of images of Florence through the ages from the XV century to recent days. In it are conserved the 24 beautiful panels by Giusto Utens, each representing one of the Medici properties. A cosy little museum with none of the grand splendour and "wow-factor" of most Florentine galleries but a small jewel dedicated more to Florentines than the hasty visitor.

The Opificio delle Pietre Dure, Via degli Alfani 78 (Open Tue. 8.30-19.00 and all other days, excluding Sundays, from 9.00-14.30. Entrance ticket in the region of 4 Euro). The Museum annexed to the Opificio delle Pietre Dure, currently a modern centre specialising in conservation, directly derives from the manufactory for the artistic production and workmanship of semiprecious stones which was officially founded in 1588 by Ferdinand I de' Medici. In it are conserved the prototypes and studies for many of the great gifts given by the Medici family and later the Lorraine to other courts throughout Europe. A wonderful visit for those interested in the typical Florentine art of the mosaic stone intarsia.