

1-d Florence

Main Reading text

Florence, the capital city of the Italian region of Tuscany, is famous for being the birthplace of the **Renaissance**.

The historic city attracts millions of tourists each year, which is not surprising as, due to its artistic and architectural **heritage**, it has been **ranked** as one of the most beautiful cities in the world.

The city contains many museums and art galleries, such as the Uffizi Gallery and the Pitti Palace, and is especially noted for its history, culture, Renaissance art and architecture, and monuments.

The center of the city is surrounded by thick stone walls that were built in the 14th century as a defense. At the heart of the city, in Piazza della Signoria, is Bartolomeo Ammanati's 'Fountain of Neptune', which is a masterpiece of marble **sculpture** at the **terminus** of a still-functioning Roman **aqueduct**.

In the past it was a center of **medieval** European trade and finance and one of the wealthiest cities of the time, and has been called "the Athens of the Middle Ages".

Like most important cities in history it has had its difficult times, including numerous religious and republican revolutions.

For almost 300 years, Florence was ruled by the powerful Medici family, one of history's most important noble families.

Cosimo de' Medici was the first Medici family member to control the city from behind the scenes. Although the city was technically a democracy, Cosimo de' Medici's power came from knowing and supporting many people along with cooperation with the new immigrants. The fact that the Medici family were bankers to the pope also contributed to their **ascendancy**. Cosimo was succeeded by his son Piero, who was, soon after, succeeded by Cosimo's grandson, Lorenzo. Lorenzo was a great **patron** of the arts, **commissioning** works by Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci and Botticelli. Lorenzo was an **accomplished**

musician and brought many composers and singers to Florence. He was considered to be a political and cultural mastermind of Italy in the late 15th century and then, as now, he was known as Lorenzo il Magnifico (Lorenzo the Magnificent).

Florence became a **flourishing** center for trading and banking. It was politically, economically, and culturally one of the most important cities in Europe and the world from the 14th century to the 16th century.

Starting from the late Middle Ages, Florentine money—in the form of the gold florin—financed the development of industry all over Europe, from Britain to Bruges, to Lyon and Hungary. Florentine bankers financed the English kings during the Hundred Years War, as well as the **papacy**, including the construction of their provisional capital of Avignon, in the south of France.

Probably the best-known buildings in Florence are the two that **dominate** the city's skyline: The Palazzo Vecchio and the domed cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, known as The Duomo.

The Palazzo Vecchio (Old Palace) is the town hall of Florence. This massive **crenellated** fortress-palace is an impressive building that overlooks the Piazza della Signoria. Here you can find a copy Michelangelo's famous statue 'David' as well as a **gallery** of other magnificent statues. It is one of the most significant public places in Italy.

From the **architectural** viewpoint, the construction of the Dome of Santa Maria del Fiore represented the event that marked the beginning of the Renaissance and, 600 years after its completion, is still the largest dome built in brick and mortar in the world.

The dome was built without using any type of support. To build such a dome Brunelleschi, the architect, designed **innovative** machines which could move enormous weights and lift them to **considerable** heights, thus playing a decisive role in the dome's construction.

Brunelleschi left neither drawings nor verbal descriptions of the various machines he designed and utilized. However, their exceptionally innovative nature attracted the attention of the greatest engineers of the 15th century. Leonardo da Vinci drew in his notebooks, with extreme precision, the most important machines used by Brunelleschi.

It was only in 1471, with the positioning of the **lantern** at the very top, that the dome could be considered finished.

Florence is one of the best preserved centers Renaissance of art and architecture in the world, and contains numerous museums and art galleries where

some of the world's most important works of art are held.

The Uffizi museum is one of the most famous and important art galleries in the world, it has a very large collection of international and Florentine art, **masterpieces** from the Renaissance, classical sculptures, and prints and drawings.

The Galleria dell' Accademia houses a Michelangelo collection, including the famous statue 'David' and has a collection of Russian **icons** as well as works by many artists and painters.

There are many other museums and galleries such as the Bargello, which concentrate on works by artists including Donatello, Giambologna and Michelangelo; the Palazzo Pitti, containing part of the Medici family's former private collection as well as many Renaissance works, including several by Raphael and Titian.

As might be expected in such a rich and historically important city, there are numerous palaces. Just to note a few: there is The Palazzo Vecchio, we have already mentioned, which is the town hall of Florence and also an art museum.

The Palazzo Pitti houses an important collection of paintings including those of the Medici family.

The Palazzo Medici Riccardi, designed by Michelozzo di Bartolomeo for Cosimo il Vecchio, of the Medici family, is another major **edifice**, and is well known for its stone **masonry**. Today it is the head office of the Florence province and hosts museums and the Riccardiana Library.

The Palazzo Strozzi, inspired by the Palazzo Medici but with more harmonious proportions, is today used for international expositions like the annual antique show, fashion shows and other cultural and artistic events.

As well as palaces and museum there are many different churches and religious buildings in Florence. A few of the most famous are: the San Giovanni Baptistery, which is located in front of the Florence Cathedral (the Cathedral is the Santa Maria del Fiore), and has been decorated by numerous artists, notably by Lorenzo Ghiberti with the *Gates of Paradise*. Other churches in Florence include the **Basilica** of Santa Maria Novella, which contains a store of art treasures and **funerary** monuments. Especially famous are frescoes by masters of Gothic and early Renaissance.

The Basilica of Santa Croce, the principal **Franciscan** church in the city is situated on the Piazza di Santa Croce and is the burial place of some of the most **illustrious** Italians, such as Michelangelo, Galileo, Machiavelli, Foscolo, Gentile, Rossini, and Marconi, thus it is known also as the Tempio dell'Itale

Glorie (Temple of the Italian Glories).

The Basilica of San Lorenzo, which is one of the largest churches in the city, is situated at the center of Florence's main market district, and the burial place of all the principal members of the Medici family from Cosimo il Vecchio to Cosimo III.

Aside from such monuments, Florence contains many famous major squares (*piazze*) and streets such as; Piazza della Repubblica, Piazza Santa Croce, Piazza Santa Trinita, Piazza San Marco, Piazza Santa Maria Novella, Piazza Beccaria and Piazza della Libertà. All these places, where you can sit in the cafés and relax with delicious Italian coffee, are well worth visiting.

With all this history and culture going back several hundred years, it is not surprising that tourism is the most significant contribution to the economy of the city.

In proportion to its size, Florence is believed to have the greatest concentration of art in the world. Thus, cultural tourism is particularly strong, with world-renowned museums such as the Uffizi selling over 1.6 million tickets a year.

Florence has approximately 35,000 hotel beds and 23,000 other accommodation facilities (campsites, guesthouses, youth hostels and farmhouses), giving potential for overall stays to exceed 10 million visitor/nights a year. Visitors also include thousands of day-trippers brought in by **cruise** ships and by road and rail.

Vocabulary

1. RENAISSANCE [listen here] (n) 文藝復興

The period of European history between the 14th and 17th centuries when there was a new interest in science and in ancient art and literature especially in Italy.

2. HERITAGE (n) 遺產

- a. The traditions, achievements, beliefs, etc., that are part of the history of a group or nation.
Hospitality is a cherished Southern heritage.
- b. The property that descends to an heir, or anything transmitted by or acquired from a predecessor.
This farm is my heritage from my father, as it was for him from his father.

3. RANKED (v) 排名

The position in a group or organization.

He was ranked third tennis player in the world.

Her first book was ranked above all others.

4. SCULPTURE (n) 雕刻品

A piece of art that is made by carving or molding clay, stone, metal, etc.

An exhibit of African sculpture.

Her first book was inspired by her travels in the Far East.

5. **TERMINUS (n)** 目標；終點

The end of a travel route (such as a rail or bus line) or the station at the end of a travel route. The end of something

Taipei is the terminus for the northbound train.

6. **AQUEDUCT (n)** 溝渠；導水管

A structure that looks like a bridge and that is used to carry water over a valley. A pipe or channel that is used to bring water to an area.

They were amazed that the ancient Roman aqueduct still carried water to distant villages.

7. **MEDIEVAL (adj)** 中古世紀的

a. Of or relating to the Middle Ages. Of or relating to the period of European history from about A.D. 500 to about 1500.

Everywhere was dangerous in medieval times.

b. Very old, too old to be useful or acceptable.

They're using a computer system that seems almost medieval by today's standards.

8. **ASCENDANCY (n)** 優勢；權勢

A position of power in which someone can control or influence other people.

A book describing the ascendancy of fascism in Europe after World War I.

She gained ascendancy in the debate.

9. **PATRON (n)** 贊助者

a. A person who gives money and support to an artist, organization, etc..

She is a well-known patron of the arts.

b. A person who buys the goods or uses the services of a business, library, etc..

The wealthy philanthropist is one of the city's most generous patrons of its symphony orchestra.

10. **COMMISSION (v)** 委任

The act of granting authority, or money, to someone to undertake certain functions. Commonly of a rich person who supports an artist.

The wealthy businessman commissioned a painting of his family.

11. **ACCOMPLISHED (adj)** 熟練的

a. Very skillful, having or showing the skill of an expert.

She has the confidence of an accomplished athlete.

b. Very successful. Having done or achieved many good or important things.

He is one of the school's most accomplished graduates.

12. **FLOURISHING (adj)** 繁茂的

a. To grow well. To be healthy.

Plants and animals that flourished here thousands of years ago.

b. To be very successful. To do very well

Regional markets have flourished in recent years.

c. To hold up and show something in an excited or proud way.

Dressed as a pirate, he entered the stage flourishing his sword.

13. **PAPACY (n)** 教皇地位

The office of pope (the system of government of the Roman Catholic Church of which the pope is the supreme head)

14. **DOMINATE** (n) 教皇地位

a. To have control of or power over someone or something.

One company has dominated the software market for years.

b. To be much more powerful or successful than others in a game, competition, etc.

Our team dominated play throughout the game.

15. **CRENELLATED** (adj) 有射擊口的

Having open spaces at the top of a wall so that people can shoot guns and cannons outward. The typical top of a castle wall

16. **GALLERY**(n) 畫廊；美術館 (there are several uses for gallery, but all are related to the main one)

A room or building in which people look at paintings, sculptures, etc. Also a place to buy art (art gallery).

The city art gallery has just opened a new exhibition of modern art.

17. **ARCHITECTURE** (adj) 建築學的

The art or science of designing and creating buildings.

Roman architecture still has a lot to teach us.

18. **INNOVATIVE** (adj) 創新的

Introducing or using new ideas or methods. Having new ideas about how something can be done.

An innovative approach to the problem.

A creative and innovative young designer.

19. **CONSIDERABLE** (adj) 相當大的

Large.

A considerable number of people (=a large crowd).

She was in considerable pain (= a lot of pain).

20. **LANTERN** (n) 燈籠

A light that usually burns oil, has a glass covering, and that may be carried by a handle.

21. **MASTERPIECE** (n) 傑作

Something done with great skill, such as a great book, painting, piece of music, movie, etc.; *also* : the best book, painting, piece of music, movie, etc., by a particular person

The painting was immediately recognized as a masterpiece.

Her study of apes is a masterpiece.

22. **ICON** (n) 畫像；雕像

A widely known symbol. Commonly, a small picture on a computer screen that represents a program or function. But originally a conventional religious image typically painted on a small wooden panel and used in the prayers of Eastern Christians (Greek, Russian etc.)

23. **EDIFICE** (n) 大廈；雄偉建築物

A large and usually impressive building such as a church or government building.

The U.S. Capitol building is one of America's most impressive edifices.

24. **MASONRY** (n) 石造建築

The stone, brick, or concrete used to build things, or the work done using stone, brick, or concrete. The work done by a mason.

25. **BASILICA** (n) 長方形建築

A large church that has a long central part that ends in a curved wall.

26. **FUNERARY** (adj) 喪葬的

- a. Of something used for, or associated with burial (Funeral = a ceremony at which a dead person is buried or cremated).

A pharaoh's funerary chamber.

27. **FRANCISCAN** (adj) 聖方濟的

A member of the Christian, Order of Friars Minor founded by St. Francis of Assisi in 1209 and dedicated to a life of poverty, preaching, missionary work, and charities.

28. **ILLUSTRIOUS** (adj) 著名的

Notably or brilliantly outstanding because of dignity or achievements or actions.

He has had an illustrious military career.

An illustrious physicist who is certain to get a Nobel Prize.

29. **CRUISE** (n) 巡邏；巡航

- a. To travel on a boat or ship to a number of places as a vacation

After reaching retirement, they went on a luxury cruise around the world.

Review exercise

Choose to best word or phrase to complete the following sentences taken from the text.

1. The historic city _____ millions of tourists each year.
(A. attracts B. brings C. provides D. gives)
2. Florence has been _____ as one of the most beautiful cities in the world.
(A. said B. told C. ranked D. arrived)
3. The city is especially _____ for its history, culture and monuments
(A. seen B. noted C. biggest D. old)
4. The center of the city is _____ by thick stone walls.
(A. covered B. given C. hidden D. surrounded)
5. Florentine bankers _____ the English kings during the Hundred Years War.
(A. visited B. didn't help C. gave advise to D. financed)
6. The Palazzo Vecchio (Old Palace) is the _____ hall of Florence.
(A. town B. center C. entrance D. gallery)
7. Six hundred years after its completion, is still the largest dome _____ in brick and mortar in the world.
(A. bought B. built C. finished D. seen)
8. Leonardo da Vinci drew in his notebooks, with extreme _____ the most important machines.
(A. speed B. painting C. precision D. grace)
9. Florence contains _____ museums and art galleries where some of the world's most important works of art are held.

(A. frequent B. gallery C. hidden D. numerous)

10. Florence is believed to have the greatest _____ of art in the world.

(A. concentration B. size C. number D. sculptures)

True or False

Choose whether the statement is true or false. If you think it is false say why it is false. E.g. *Florence is the capital of Italy.* T/F. The answer is False. Why? Because Florence is the capital of the Italian region of Tuscany, not the capital of Italy.

1. Florence is a modern city. T/F
2. The city is built of thick stone walls. T/F
3. The 'Fountain of Neptune', is at the terminus of a Roman aqueduct. T/F
4. For almost 300 years, Florence was ruled by the Italians. T/F
5. Lorenzo Medici is known as Lorenzo the Magnificent. T/F
6. Florentine money in the form of gold coins was known as florins. T/F
7. The domed cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, known as The Duomo, is difficult to see. T/F
8. The original of Michelangelo's famous statue 'David' is in the Palazzo Vecchio. T/F
9. Because of the Medici family there only a few palaces in Florence. T/F
10. Michelangelo is buried at the Basilica of San Lorenzo. T/F

Reading Comprehension - choose the best answer

1. () What is the main reason for Florence's fame in modern times?
 - a. It is one of the great tourist attractions of Europe, with almost 10 million visitors per year.
 - b. The period known as the renaissance started here and consequently Florence's has much that is important artistically, culturally and architecturally.
 - c. It is an ancient city surrounded by thick stone walls, that contains many interesting medieval palaces, churches and a castle.
 - d. It is a center of European trade and provides finance to kings, governments and religious leaders.

2. () Why was Florence an important city 14th century to the 16th century?
 - a. Florence was an important city for trading and banking. It became politically, economically, and culturally one of the most important cities in Europe and the world.
 - b. Because of the rich and powerful families who lived in Florence.
 - c. Because of the construction of the Dome of Santa Maria del Fiore, an event that represented the beginning of the Renaissance.
 - d. Because it was at this time that many museums and art galleries were being built.

3. () How did the Medici family become so powerful?
 - a. They supported many people, including immigrants, and were also rich bankers who lent money to many European countries.
 - b. They were well liked by the people of Florence.
 - c. The Medici family were closely related to the leaders (popes) of the Roman Catholic Church.
 - d. The Medici family built many museums and churches and thus encourage thousands of tourists to visit Florence.