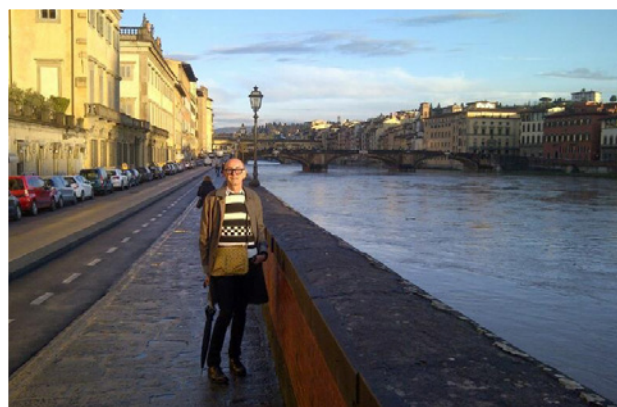


FABULOUS FLORENCE



DAVID GILLSON CELEBRATES A DECADE OF VISITING FLORENCE BY GIVING US THE LOWDOWN ON WHERE TO STAY, WHAT TO DO AND THE BEST SHOPPING AND DINING OPPORTUNITIES IN ONE OF HIS FAVOURITE CITIES

Every year I head for Italy to attend Cosmoprof in Bologna, the world's largest and most important beauty and hair trade fair. And instead of staying in Bologna, I stay a train-ride away, in fabulous Florence. It took me five years of exploring before I found my home from home there, but now there's nowhere else I'd choose to stay, but at the magnificent JK Place, a unique hotel with exquisite décor, attention to detail and special touches.

I fell in love with the lounge, which offers guests a selection of the most incredible decor books and classic Art movies. And then there are the bedrooms, all exquisitely decorated and luxurious, where the attention to detail includes a selection of the latest fashion magazines and unbelievable 100% Irish linen on the beds!



JK PLACE OFFERS AN
**ELEGANT, EXQUISITELY
 CONTEMPORARY SETTING**
 AND AN AMBIENCE OF BEING
 'AT HOME AWAY FROM HOME



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The exquisite attention to detail is what sets this sublime hotel apart. Aside from special touches in your room, guests also enjoy a pre-dinner Prosecco and antipasti, which is a great way to start an evening. As J K Place is located in the heart of Florence on Piazza Santa Maria Novella, there's no need for busses, taxis or trains; you're in close proximity to everything and can walk everywhere.

Here's my to-do list of where to go and what to do next time you're in this magnificent Italian city...

**DELIGHTFUL DINING
 IL PARIONE**

This is my all-time favorite restaurant in Florence; I haven't missed a visit here in the decade I've been coming here! To get to this casual trattoria, turn right at Tiffany's just off the glamorous Via Tornabuoni near the Arno River. I never look at the menu; I always let owner Marco choose my meal and I've yet to be disappointed by the magnificent food and fabulous wine

selection. The staff is always warm and welcoming and regulars like myself enjoy a complimentary bottle of Prosecco. I highly recommend the Florentine T-bone; it's simply the best!

tel +39055214005, www.parione.net

QUATTRO LEONI

I discovered this exciting restaurant on my last tip to Florence. It's a trendy Trattoria in the Boho-chic Santo Spirito neighborhood and offers interesting takes on traditional Tuscan fare. I highly recommend the amazing, innovative pasta dishes. The decor is quaint, cosy and trendy. Grab a table outside in the courtyard if you visit in the summer.

Via de Vellutini, Florence, tel +39055218562

SOSTANZA

Just a short walk from J K Place, this very traditional restaurant offers exceptional meat dishes. The steak is phenomenal and the butter chicken is a must-have. I also love the Pappardelle with Bolognese sauce.

Via Porcellana 25, tel +39055212691

LA CUCINA DEL GARGA

Another firm favourite with delicious Tuscan fare. The restaurant is sophisticated although quite elaborately decorated and offers a great atmosphere.

Via San Zanobi 33, tel +39055475286

LATINI

This old Trattoria with communal tables offers an excellent wine list and great food. It's one of the best places to sample a traditional Florentine T-bone. Latini has a private wine cellar for private parties.

Via dei Palchetti 6, tel +399055210916

**BARS AND CLUBS
 NOIR**

Located on the banks of the Arno, Noir is a great spot for pre-dinner drinks. Join the locals who meet here after work for happy hour. Vibey and a fun way to start your evening.

Lugarno Corsini 12, tel +39055210751

YAB CLUB

Although Florence isn't renowned for its clubs, I've always had a cool time at Yab and ended up there many an evening. Check the listing for the DJ's of the night as the type of music changes nightly.

Via de Sussetti 5, tel +39055215160

DORIS

With a cool atmosphere, this elegant and ambient private lounge only gets going after 2am. Friday night is Electronic Music Night – it's best to call for a list of the international DJ's.

Via de Pandolfini 36, tel +390552337783

**SHOPPING
 LUISA VIA ROMA**

To me, this is quite simply one of the best stores in the world! It's home to all the major high-end fashion labels including

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Lanvin, McQueen, Valentino, Dior, Balmain and many more. It also boasts the most phenomenal men's and women's shoes as well as the coolest bespoke jewelry. Downstairs you'll find ultra-cool street wear as well as unusual Japanese labels. This amazing store often hosts very cool exhibitions, art installations and fashion events. If you can't get there, the online store is absolutely fabulous, but if you're in Florence, it's a must-visit destination.

Via Roma 19-21, tel +39 055 906 4116

THE MALL - THE LUXURY OUTLET

For a Shopaholic like me, a visit to Florence is definitely not complete without spending a day at the famous Mall! Located just 30 minutes from Florence, in the spectacular Tuscan countryside, it offers all the designer brands at seriously discounted prices in a fabulously stylish setting. Prada, Gucci, Saint Laurent, Dior, Armani, Burberry, Marni, Valentino, McQueen, Tods, Lanvin and Balenciaga are just a few of the prestigious designers who have fabulous stores here, and there's a lovely casual restaurant where you can have a bite to eat. Open seven days a week from 10am to 7pm, The Mall really gets my pulse racing! Catch the shuttle from the station or a transfer from your hotel – and make sure you have enough space in the car for all those bags.

For more info visit www.themall.it

or tel +39 05586577775. The Mall via Europe 8 50066 Leccio Reggello (fl) Tuscany

FASHION MUSEUMS

Many of Italy's top fashion houses started in Florence. Gucci, Pucci and Salvatore Ferragamo all have their roots in this magnificent city, and both Gucci and Salvatore Ferragamo have amazing museums in their hometown. So if you're fashion obsessed, like me, this is a cool way to combine two great passions – fashion and museums!

MUSEUM SALVATORE FERRAGAMO

Housed in the basement of the enormous Ferragamo shop and headquarters on the banks of the Arno at via dei Tornabuoni, this stunning museum boasts the most comprehensive collection of Ferragamo shoes dating from 1927 to the present. It also offers special exhibitions; this year I enjoyed the museum's tribute to Marilyn Monroe.

Via dei Tornabuoni 2, tel +390553562455

GUCCI MUSEUM

Gucci's fabulous museum is housed in the three-storey Palazzo della Mercanzia. It's dedicated to the history of this Italian powerful fashion house and also contains a huge exhibition space where international art and design exhibitions are held. 🏰

Piazza della Signoria 10, tel +390557592330



JK PLACE

This tiny best-kept secret in the heart of downtown Florence is an intimate 20-roomed establishment with extraordinary décor and a refined atmosphere. JK Place offers an elegant, exquisitely contemporary setting and an ambience of being 'at home away from home', with burning fireplaces, contemporary objets and a refined, unobtrusive approach. Designed and decorated by Florentine architect Michele Bonan, the hotel is both sophisticated and timeless, with understated, but unquestionable luxurious touches throughout.

Breakfast, drinks and snacks are served in what used to be the original building's internal courtyard, which is now covered with glass. The new magnificently decorated black and white JK Lounge is often reserved for private dinners and events. All the rooms are individually decorated, with great attention to detail and every luxury.

For more information, visit www.jkplace.com, or email info@jkplace.com. Located at Piazza Santa Maria Novella 7 in Florence, tel 0552645181, fax 0552658387

