

## DAVID'S FAVORITE PLACES IN FLORENCE

### ACCOMODATIONS

The list of accommodations below is reproduced from the well-researched *Time Out* guide. The list contains both family run B&Bs and larger hotels. As a small business owner I have an affinity for small businesses. I prefer small, family run B&Bs to large less personal hotels. The B&B's also tend to be less expensive, even though the rooms are virtually the same. The accommodations are grouped into two categories, MODERATE and BUDGET. All of the MODERATE hotels have bathrooms in the room. Most of the BUDGET rooms have bathrooms. If you book a BUDGET hotel you would want to specify whether there is a bathroom.

I would encourage you to book ahead as hotel rooms in Florence tend to fill up during the summer months. To reserve a room you will be asked to give a credit card number. You can cancel the room with no fee if you give at least 24 hours notice. Most hotels now have online reservations systems. All of the hotel listings below include websites.

I would recommend the following B&B's:

- Dei Mori
- Le Stanze di Santa Croce
- Residenza Il Maggio.

Among the moderate priced hotels I would recommend:

- Torre Guelfa
- Annalena
- Bencista (in Fiesole, 20 minutes by bus from the center of Florence)

### MODERATE B&Bs

#### **Antica Dimora Firenze**

*Via San Gallo, 72n (055 4627296, [www.anticadimorafirenze.it](http://www.anticadimorafirenze.it))*

The duo behind the wonderful Residenza Johlea have recently added this more up market property to their portfolio of small, charming, value-for-money guesthouses. The location is a good one: near Piazza San Marco and just ten minutes away from the worst of the tourist hordes. The six light and airy bedrooms are all based on different pastel color schemes, and have been thoughtfully decorated using beautiful fabrics, antiques, oriental rugs, and traditional tiled floors. One room has a private terrace with rooftop views. Breakfast is served in the sitting room.

#### ★ **Dei Mori** (*David's Favorites*)

*Via D. Alighieri, 12 (055 211438, [www.bnb.it/deimori](http://www.bnb.it/deimori))*

If the rapturous comments in the visitors' book are any indication, this friendly guesthouse in the heart of the medieval city must be one of the best places to stay in Florence. The rooms are keenly priced and comfortable: those on the first floor are more traditional, while those upstairs are quite smart and have private baths. The welcome is exceptionally warm: fresh flowers, bright rugs, cheerful paintings and a comfy sitting room complete with a TV, stereo and lost of books and magazines. There's a terrace from which you can just see the top of the Duomo.

★ **Il Maggio** (*David's Favorites*)

*Corso Italia 13 50123 Firenze (tel.055 2658185, [www.residenzailmaggio.it](http://www.residenzailmaggio.it))*

The Residenza Il Maggio is a new bed and breakfast with five fully furnished bedrooms. The rooms are all stylishly decorated and complete with bathrooms, air-conditioning, satellite TV, and internet access. The B&B is family run and just a 10-minute walk from the Duomo. A generous breakfast is served featuring homemade cakes and marmalade.

★ **Le Stanze di Santa Croce**

*Via delle Pinzochere, 6 (055 2001366, [www.viapinzochere6.it](http://www.viapinzochere6.it))*

The location of this sweet little three-floor townhouse couldn't be better, but you could say the same thing about the welcoming interior. The four comfortable double bedrooms have been individually furnished with pretty fabrics, lively colors and a mix of old and new furniture. Breakfast is served on a lovely flower-filled terrace where guests can hang out all day and help themselves from a well-stocked 'honesty fridge'. Mariangela, the owner, is so good in the kitchen that she even offers cooking courses. A fresh, appealing example of exactly how a B&B should be run.

**Relais Grand Tour**

*Via Santa Reparate, 21 (055 283955, [www.florencegrandtour.com](http://www.florencegrandtour.com))*

The restoration of this 16<sup>th</sup>-century house and its subsequent transformation into a delightful B&B was a labor of love for owners Cristina and Giuseppe, and it shows. If it seems like the pair treat guests as visitors to their own home, there's a good reason, it is. The couple lives on the first floor, where there are three pretty bedrooms. Below, on the ground floor, are five quite luxurious (and more expensive) 'suites'. Throughout, the bedrooms and bathrooms are done out with carefully chosen antiques, old majolica tiles, pictures and curios. Breakfast is served only in the rooms on the first floor.

**MODERATE HOTELS**

★ **Annalena** (*David's Favorites*)

*Via Romana, 34 (055 222439, [www.hotelannalena.it](http://www.hotelannalena.it))*

The Annalena is housed in a 15<sup>th</sup>-century building that, at various points in history, has been used as a refuge for young widows and lodgings for refugees from Mussolini's Fascist police. Today's guests are less desperate, though the hotel retains a link to its past through its pleasant old-fashioned atmosphere. The huge salon serves as lounge, bar and breakfast room, while the comfortable bedrooms, some of which are very spacious, are furnished mostly with antiques; the best have balconies overlooking the gorgeous gardens.

**Casci**

*Via Cavour, 13 (055 211686, [www.hotelcasci.com](http://www.hotelcasci.com))*

The super-helpful Lombardi family runs this friendly hotel, which occupies a 15<sup>th</sup>-century palazzo just slightly north of the Duomo. The open-plan bar and breakfast room area have frescoed ceilings and shelves stocked with guidebooks; the 25 bedrooms are functional but quite comfortable and come with up-to-date bathrooms. Bedrooms at the back look on to a beautiful garden; two sizeable family rooms sleep up to five.

## **Cestelli**

*Borgo SS Apostoli, 25 (055 214213, [www.hotelcestelelli.com](http://www.hotelcestelelli.com))*

When a young Italo-Japanese couple took over the old, one-star Cestelli in 2004, they bought into some wonderful old furniture and a great atmosphere. They completed a major renovation and today the hotel has eight bright bedrooms (all but three have private baths), with new orthopedic mattresses and fluffy white towels. However, the owners have taken great care not to destroy the old-fashioned feel: a mix of old and new furniture fills the bedrooms, some of which have original parquet floors. There's no breakfast.

## **Hotel delle Arti**

*Via dei Servi, 38A (055 2678553, [www.hoteldellearti.it](http://www.hoteldellearti.it))*

Under the same ownership as the Loggiato dei Serviti, the Hotel delle Arti is done out with just as much taste and style, but it's a simpler property with more of a country look. The nine bedrooms have wooden floors and are painted in restful shades of green and cream; the furniture is mainly made up of pine or wicker pieces and the upholstery includes some unfussy checked fabrics. The three corner rooms are particularly spacious and light. The pretty breakfast room has an attractive wrap around terrace.

## **★ Pensione Bencista (David's Favorites)**

*Via Benedetto di Maiano, 4; Fiesole (055 59163, [www.bencista.com](http://www.bencista.com))*

Housed in a former convent and run as a *pensione* by the Simoni family since 1925, the Bencista has a fabulous setting on the hillside just below Fiesole. Rooms are furnished with antiques; one has a fireplace and shelves stuffed with old books. Bedrooms are off a warren of passageways and staircases. No two are alike – those at the front enjoy unrivalled city views as does the flower-filled terrace. You will need to take a bus or taxi back and forth from the center of Firenze (20-minute ride), but if you are looking for a peaceful hotel surrounded by lush gardens the Bencista is a great choice.

## **★ Torre Guelfa (David's Favorites)**

*Borgo SS Apostoli, 8 (055 2396338, [hoteltorreguelfa.com](http://hoteltorreguelfa.com))*

This very pleasant hotel inhabits three floors of an ancient palazzo and boasts the tallest privately owned tower in the city, from which the 360-degree views are stunning. The location of the Torre Guelfa is perfect for exploring the center of Florence. Breakfast is served in a sunny, glassed-in loggia; there's also an elegant sitting room with a painted box ceiling. The bedrooms are decorated in pastel colors with wrought-iron beds; No. 15 has its own roof garden. The six rooms on the first floor are cheaper, simpler, marginally darker and entirely TV-free.

## **BUDGET**

### **Abaco**

*Via dei Banchi, 1 (055 2381919, [www.abaco-hotel.it](http://www.abaco-hotel.it))*

There's a bit of a climb up to the second floor of this 550-year old building; once you've made it, you'll find a modest shell housing a handsome hotel. The friendly owner has painstakingly decorated the place in grand style: the seven bedrooms, each named after a Renaissance artist, are decorated in sumptuous fabrics with reproductions of works by the relevant painter on the walls. Gilding adorns the picture and mirror frames, and most of the beds are canopied. Three rooms have their own full bathrooms, while others have only a shower. Breakfast is free if you pay in cash.

**Dali**

*Via dell'Oriulo, 17 (055 2340706, [www.hoteldali.com](http://www.hoteldali.com))*

Run with genuine care by an enthusiastic young couple, this little gem just east of the Duomo offers spotless, bright and homely rooms at budget prices and – a miracle in central Florence – free car parking in the internal courtyard below. Only four of the ten rooms have private bathrooms, but all are thoughtfully decorated and furnished with hand stenciling, pretty bedcovers and old bedheads. Due to the presence of a pub opposite, the rooms at the front can be a bit noisy, but ear plugs are supplied; rooms at the back overlooking the courtyard are sunny and quiet. Breakfast is not provided.

**Locanda degli Artisti**

*Via Faenza, 56 (055 213806, [www.hotelazzi.it](http://www.hotelazzi.it))*

The Locanda degli Artisti is an interesting and comfortable little hotel with good prices. The big reception area has a retro vibe; you'll probably be greeted by classical music or jazz on the sound system. Eco-friendly materials and natural colors have been used in the decoration of the bright, sunny bedrooms, and organic produce is served at breakfast. The lovely terrace is great for post-sightseeing relaxation.

**Scoti**

*Via de'Tornabuoni, 7 (055 232128, [www.hotelscoti.com](http://www.hotelscoti.com))*

If you want to secure a room in the wonderful Scoti, housed on the second floor of a 15<sup>th</sup>-century palazzo, book well ahead: it's popular with visitors from all over the world. After extensive renovation a couple of years back, the lofty bedrooms are simple, but bright and sunny and all have their own bathrooms; the frescoed salon has retained its air of faded glory. Australian hostess Doreen and her Italian husband serve breakfast around a big communal table or in the rooms.