every road leads to rome: an ancient roman walk through florence

Distance: 1.5 km
Time: at your leisure
Cost: $0

Julius Caesar himself, founded Florentia in 59 BCE as a military camp. Situated along the Arno the town became an important pit stop on the trade route to the sea.

Piazza della Repubblica - The site of the Ancinet Roman Forum, where Via Roma meets Via del Corso. It was the exact center on the ancient city's grid plan.

Go to Via Roma (the street that forms the east side of the piazza) and turn right (south) towards the Arno. Walk for a couple of blocks. After you pass the Mercato Nuovo you will see a sudden bend to the right in the otherwise perfectly straight road. This bend marks the point where the southern city wall was situated. After it was torn down the road bent extend to the river. Because this walk is strictly Roman don't pass that imaginary wall and turn to your left to enter Piazza della Signoria.

Piazza della Signoria- Beneath the piazza lies an extensive archaeological site, revealing the Roman textile center making Florentia an early hot spot for the clothing trade in the Roman Empire. While in the piazza check out the demure Roman works among the Renaissance heavy hitters in the Loggia dei Lanzi. Exit the piazza by walking along the north side of the Palazzo Vecchio on Via dei Gondi. Do you feel the street sloping down? This is because you are walking down into the ancient Roman theater.

Via Torta - Continue straight on Via dei Gondi, which will turn into Borgo dei Greci. In a couple of blocks you will arrive at Via Torta. Take either a right or a left and quickly feel the road curving in a perfect circle. You are walking around the foundation of the ancient colosseum.

Watch Towers -Head back in the direction of the Palazzo Vecchio and take a right on the street just before the Palazzo, Via Proconsolo. As you walk by the Bargello keep one eye peeled for the outline of a large metal circle in the middle of the street. This circle marks the spot of the watch tower along the ancient city wall.

Keep heading north on Via Proconsolo until you reach Via Dante Alighieri. On the left corner just before Via Dante Alighieri, peek into the window of the high end fashion store and then look down. Below the racks of fur vests and snake skin stilettos the glass floors reveal the ancient city underneath our feet.

Piazza del Duomo Continue on Via Proconsolo the piazza. Under the Baptistry lies the foundation of an Ancient Roman temple making this the ancient religious center of the city as well. As Rome switched teams from Pagan to Christian in the early 4th century, so did Florentia. Therefore, deep down beneath the behemoth Duomo one will find the ancient Roman Christian church of Santa Reparata that was constructed in the year 406 BCE.

Fiesole – Catch bus #7 to the hilltop town of Fiesole to check out the Roman amphitheater. Tickets to explore the ruins are a bit pricey, so for a free sneak peek head up the steep Via San Francesco out of the northwest corner of the main piazza. In about 3 minutes you will reach a staircase to your right that leads you up to a park. Walk along the fence on your right until you come to an opening. From this vantage point you can steal a great view of the ruins below.