

florence for free

free walks and work-arounds for rich italian adventures

walking tour: frightening florence



Distance: 3.3 km

Time: faster if you find yourself running for your life

Cost: \$0

Spooky Stops:

- A. **Open Window in Piazza Santissima Annunziata**—Follow Via dei Servi out of Piazza del Duomo for approximately 5 minutes to reach the Piazza. Once in the Piazza, with your back to the church and facing the Duomo, look to the pink Palazzo Grifoni to the right of Via dei Servi. Direct your attention to the window on the top floor, far right and find a shutter ajar. Here the ghost of a widow is said to wait patiently for her husband who left her in this very spot when he left for war centuries ago. Legend has it that all hell breaks loose when the window is closed, explaining why you see the shutter ajar today.
- B. **Pensione Burchianti** —Make your way to the San Lorenzo Market. Walk through the market and follow it as it curves to the left around the church. When you emerge from the market notice how the road forks. Follow the fork to the left on Via del Giglio. Within a few yards you will reach Via del Giglio 8 and see a small bronze plate by the buzzer that indicates that you have arrived at the Pensione. Locals believe it to be haunted by three ghosts. In one room, the room that Mussolini stayed in while in Florence, many have reported seeing an apparition of a small pinkish male ghost. Staff and guests continue to report apparitions of an old woman and small child roaming the *pensione* as well.
- C. **The Stone Head of Santa Maria Maggiore** - Walk to the end of Via del Giglio and head back in the direction of the Duomo (left). Two blocks before you reach Piazza del Duomo you will come to Santa Maria Maggiore on the right side of the street. Go to the north side of the church and look up to find a small disembodied head looking down at you. As the legend goes, a man accused of sorcery was being dragged to Piazza Santa Croce to meet his death. As he passed by the church, a monk leaned his head out a window and shouted to the crowd not to give the man a drink. The angry heretic cast a spell on the monk that turned him to stone and trapped his head on the side of the church for eternity.
- D. **Dante in the Badia** - To meet a more historically prominent ghost head to the Badia. To reach the abbey cut through Piazza del Duomo and exit onto Via Proconsolo from the southeast corner. Follow the road south and just past Via Dante Alighieri you will reach the entrance to the Badia. As the story goes, the Florentine poet Dante, who grew up just across the street from the abbey, spends eternity in his own personal eighth level of Hell haunting the grounds as he restlessly searches for his lover, Beatrice.
- E. **The Bargello** - Our next spooky stop is just across the street at the Bargello. Since the 13th century the *palazzo* has served as a court, the headquarters of the police, a torture prison, and under the Medici Dukes a penitentiary. Although the prison cells are now replaced with paintings and sculptures, the chapel where criminals received their Last Rights before being escorted to their executions remains a chilling reminder of the *palazzo's* dark past. The courtyard of the Bargello also hosted countless executions.
- F. **Piazza della Signoria** - From the Bargello take Via Proconsolo south for one block. Turn right on Via dei Gondi to enter the piazza. Rewind 534 years to April 1478. This now exquisite and charming piazza was then a lurid and bloody scene of Medici revenge. It was at this time that the masterminds behind the infamous Pazzi Conspiracy were being tracked down, brutally tortured, humiliated and killed. The leaders of the conspiracy were hung from the windows of the Palazzo Vecchio as a graphic reminder not to mess with the Medici. Over the centuries this town square continued to be the best place to make a bloody point.
- G. **Forte di Belvedere** - Cross the Ponte Vecchio to reach the Oltrarno. Take your first left and follow it until the road forks. You will veer right into a small covered street where you will find a red bicycle propped up against the left wall. Begin the long trek up Costa dei Magnoli. Once you reach the top make a right at the Museo delle Porcellane. You will now see the large stone retaining walls of the fort and can walk around the structure on the very, according to Florentines, haunted labyrinth of streets. This area was notorious for a high crime rate - beatings, muggings and murders. Moreover, it was this spot of land where women accused of witchcraft were burned at the stake. Today it is said that these lost souls still linger in the alleys and at night their shadows can be seen against the stonewalls of the fortress. Whispers come from empty alleys and the sounds of children laughing echo in empty squares.

